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THE AMBUSH.

If I were not a poor maiden aunt, I think I should like to be a rich bachelor uncle better than anybody else, especially at Christmas time. As a maiden aunt, with a slender annuity, I have a very happy time of it superintending the mincepies, looking to the plate, counting the table napkins, and dusting the best china. I have a merry time of it, too, when we deck the rooms with holly and mistletoe. I get really quite as many kisses now as I did when I was younger; but then there is a very great difference indeed between the ages of the kissers and the kissee. That doesn't matter. And yet in

some respects the position of a bachelor uncle with a handsome competency and a doubtful will must be one of great glorification. I hope Uncle Benjamin really does mean to leave the girls something; he always looks as though he did, and he's certainly a very even-tempered person; and I should, if I were more familiar with his character, pronounce him to be, as the boys say, a "jolly" sort of man. If we had met earlier in life, and I had — But there, that's ridiculous. I really fancy the young folks would like him if he were as poor as — as I am. He is very pleasant. I don't think he'd have quite so much attention paid him, though, by James and

Henrietta. They wouldn't waylay him in the passage to take off his coat, and hold his hat, and see after him in that fussy way; and really, as to Samuel, the way he forces the baby upon him — and he a bachelor, too — it's what I call *indicate*. Even the girls, poor things! must have a suspicion that they're not always genuine, for they've been told that Uncle Benjamin is "well off." What a pity that is! They'd better — But there; I'm not going to rail on Christmas Day; and there's his knock at the door. I'll go and see what the girls are after. In ambush under the mistletoe, I'll be bound; and very right too.



"THE AMBUSCADE."—(DRAWN BY C. ROBINSON)

Foreign Intelligence.

FRANCE.

The Emperor and Empress of the French returned on Monday to the Tuileries from their sojourn at Compiègne.

The plan for the organisation of the army is still, if not the only, at least the principal matter of discussion and interest with the French people. The intensity of the opposition to it increases daily. This state of the public feeling has aroused the attention of the Government, who have instructed the Prefects to send in reports as to the impression produced by the plan in their several departments. Of fifteen reports already sent in, eight afford decided proof of the unpopularity of the measure.

ITALY.

Signor Tonello, who is at Rome on a mission from the Italian Government, had an interview with the Pope on Saturday last. It is reported at Florence that the mission of Signor Tonello promises to be successful in bringing about an arrangement between the Holy Father and the Italian Government.

The last French soldier has now left Papal territory. The embarkation was completed on Monday. France, therefore, has completely fulfilled her part of the September Convention.

PRUSSIA.

At the first meeting, on Saturday last, of the Conference to settle the Constitution of the North German Confederation twenty-three plenipotentiaries were present. Count Bismarck opened the business by an explanatory speech.

King John and the Crown Prince of Saxony have been on a visit to Berlin, and great cordiality is said to have characterised the intercourse of the Prussian and Saxon Courts.

AUSTRIA.

The draught of the address proposed by the Moderate Party in reply to the Royal rescript was adopted by the Lower House of the Hungarian Diet on Saturday last.

The Croatian Diet agreed, on Tuesday, to the proposals contained in the draught of the address that the autonomy and separate administration of Hungary, Croatia, and Transylvania ought to remain the unchangeable basis of the Constitution of those provinces; that Croatia is under no obligation to send representatives to the Hungarian Diet, and that she has a right to treat independently with the Emperor respecting her future Constitutional position.

RUSSIA.

Russia is going to carry out reforms in Poland. At least an Imperial ukase has been issued, appointing a commission, under the presidency of the Emperor, to take the necessary steps for that purpose.

CRETE.

An English vessel has arrived at Athens with some Cretan families, who embarked from the island notwithstanding the Turkish blockade. According to advices from Candia, Mustapha Pacha appeared to be marching against Selimno and Kissamos.

THE UNITED STATES.

The principal item in the news from New York, which extends to the 8th, is the President's Message, an epitome of which we give elsewhere. The contest between Mr. Johnson and Congress continued. Congress had passed a bill withdrawing the pardoning power from the President in respect of those persons who were engaged in the rebellion. The House of Representatives had also instructed the Judiciary Committee to report on the mode of proceeding to be adopted for trial and impeachment in cases before the Senate.

A bill had been introduced in the House of Representatives to provide territorial Governments for the Southern States, and to extend the franchise to all persons who remained loyal during the rebellion. The House had removed from the chairmanship of committees three members who supported the policy of President Johnson.

General Sedgwick had been ordered to Washington to be tried by court-martial for violation of orders in occupying Matamoros.

Advices from Mexico, via New York, state that the Emperor Maximilian was receiving increased Mexican support.

OPENING OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF KING VICTOR EMMANUEL.

THE Italian Parliament was opened on Saturday last by the King in person. His Majesty delivered the following speech from the throne:—

Signori Senatori, Signori Deputati,—

Our country is henceforth free from all foreign domination. It is with profound joy that I declare this to the representatives of 25,000,000 Italians. The nation had faith in me and in it. This great event, by crowning our common efforts, gives a fresh impulse to the work of civilisation, and renders more stable the political equilibrium of Europe. By her promptitude in military organisation, and by the rapid union of her people, Italy has acquired the credit which was necessary to enable her to attain independence by herself and with the aid of efficacious alliances. Italy has found encouragement and support in this laborious work in the sympathy of civilised Governments and peoples; and has been further sustained and strengthened by the courageous perseverance of the Venetian provinces in the common enterprise of national emancipation.

The treaty of peace with the empire of Austria, which will be laid before you, will be followed by negotiations which will facilitate exchanges of prisoners between the two States.

The French Government, faithful to the obligations which it contracted by the September Convention, has withdrawn its troops from Rome. On its side, the Italian Government, observant of its engagements, has respected, and will respect, the Pontifical territory. Our good understanding with the French Emperor, to whom we are bound by friendship and gratitude, the moderation of the Romans, the wisdom of the Pontiff, and the religious sentiment and right feeling of the Italian people will aid us to distinguish and conciliate the Catholic interests and national aspirations which are interwoven and contending with each other at Rome. Attached to the religion of our ancestors, which is also that of the great majority of Italians, I nevertheless respect the principle of liberty which breathes through our institutions, and which, broadly and sincerely applied, will remove the causes of the old differences between Church and State. This disposition on our part, by reassuring Catholic consciences, will accomplish, I hope, the wishes which I form, that the Sovereign Pontiff may remain independent at Rome. Italy is secure now that, besides the valour of her sons, which, through all the changes of fortune, has never belied itself either by land or sea, nor in the ranks of the army or the volunteers, she possesses as the ramparts of her independence the very bulwarks which served to oppress her. Italy can, therefore, and now ought to, turn her efforts to increasing her prosperity.

As Italians have shown admirable concord in the affirmation of their independence, so now let all devote themselves with intelligence, ardour, and indomitable constancy to the development of the economic resources of the peninsula. Several bills will be laid before you with this object.

In the midst of the labours of peace, favoured by a secure future, we shall not neglect following the lessons of experience, to perfect our military organisation, in order that, with the least possible expense, Italy may not be destitute of the forces necessary to maintain her in the place which belongs to her among great nations. The measures recently taken relative to the administration of the kingdom, and those which will be proposed to you—above all, respecting the collection of the taxes and the accountability of the State—will contribute to ameliorate the management of public affairs.

My Government has provided in advance for the expenditure of the year about to open, and for extraordinary payments of every kind. They will ask of you the continuation in 1867 of the financial measures voted for 1866. The legislative bodies will also maturely discuss the bills which will be laid before them to ameliorate the assessment of the taxes, and to equalise them among the different provinces of the kingdom. If, as I am fully confident, the people of Italy will not fail in that activity which created the wealth and power of our ancestors, it will not be long before the public exchequer will reach its definitive equilibrium.

Signori Senatori, Signori Deputati,—

Italy is now restored to herself. Her responsibility is equal to the power she has acquired and the full liberty she enjoys in the use of her strength. The great things which we have done in a short space increase our obligation not to fail in our task—which is, to know how to govern ourselves with the vigour required by the social condition of the kingdom and the liberality demanded by our institutions.

Liberty in our political institutions, authority in the Government,

activity in the citizens, and the empire of law upon all and over all, will carry Italy to the height of her destiny, and fulfil what the world expects from her.

His Majesty's speech was received with general applause.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S MESSAGE.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON, in his Message to Congress, says:—

It is a matter of regret that no considerable advance has been made towards an adjustment of the differences between the United States and Great Britain arising out of the depredations upon our national commerce and other trespasses committed during our civil war by British subjects, in violation of international law and treaty obligations. The delay, however, may be believed to have resulted in no small degree from the domestic situation of Great Britain. Whatever might be the wishes of the two Governments, it is manifest that goodwill and friendship between the two countries cannot be established until a reciprocity in the practice of good faith and neutrality shall be restored between the respective nations.

Relative to the Fenian invasion of Canada, he says:—

Citizens were warned against taking part in or aiding such unlawful proceedings, and the proper officers were directed to take all necessary measures for the enforcement of the laws. The expedition failed; but it has not been without its painful consequences. Some of our citizens who, it was alleged, were engaged in the expedition were captured, and have been brought to trial as for a capital offence in the province of Canada.

Believing that the severity of civil punishment for misguided persons who have engaged in revolutionary attempts, which have become made to the failed, is unsound and unwise, such representations have been made to the British Government in behalf of the convicted persons as, being sustained by an enlightened and humane judgment, will, it is hoped, induce in their case an exercise of clemency and a judicious amnesty to all who were engaged in the movement. Counsel has been employed by the Government to defend the citizens of the United States on trial for capital offences in Canada, and a discontinuance of the prosecutions instituted in the courts of the United States against those who took part in the expedition has been directed.

I have regarded the expedition as not only political in its nature, but also as, in a great measure, foreign from the United States in its causes, character, and objects. The attempt was understood to be made in sympathy with an insurgent party in Ireland, and, by striking a British province on this continent, designed to aid in obtaining redress for political grievances which it was assumed the people of Ireland had suffered at the hands of the British Government during a period of several centuries. The persons engaged in it were chiefly natives of that country, some of whom had, while others had not, become citizens of the United States. Complaints of misgovernment in Ireland continually engage the attention of the British nation, and so great an agitation is now prevailing in Ireland that the British Government have deemed it necessary to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in that country. These circumstances must necessarily modify the opinion which we might otherwise have entertained in regard to an expedition expressly prohibited by our neutrality laws. So long as those laws remain upon our statute book they should be faithfully executed.

With regard to Mexico, he says that repeated assurances have been made that the evacuation of Mexico by the French expeditionary forces will take place next spring, and that the French Government would then assume the attitude of non-intervention in Mexico as is held by the Government of the United States. It is believed that with the evacuation of Mexico no subject for serious differences between France and the United States would remain. He adds:—

Being deeply interested in the cause of liberty and humanity, it seemed an obvious duty on our part to exercise whatever influence we possessed for the restoration and permanent establishment in that country of a democratic and republican form of government. All settlements of American claims for indemnity against France for acts committed by that Power in the exercise of a belligerent power against Mexico have been deferred until a mutual adjustment shall be agreed upon by the two countries.

Speaking of his reconstruction policy, the President says:—

Upon this question, so vitally affecting the restoration of the Union and the permanency of our present form of government, my convictions heretofore expressed have undergone no change, but, on the contrary, their correctness has been confirmed by reflection and time.

If the admission of loyal members to seats in the respective Houses of Congress was wise and expedient a year ago, it is no less wise and expedient now.

I know of no measure more imperatively demanded by every consideration of national interest, sound policy, and equal justice than the admission of loyal members from the now unrepresented States. This would consummate the work of restoration and exert a most salutary influence in the re-establishment of peace, harmony, and fraternal feeling. It would tend greatly to renew the confidence of the American people in the vigour and stability of their institutions.

The President, in conclusion, says:—

Our Government is now undergoing its most trying ordeal, and my earnest prayer is that the peril may be successfully and finally passed without impairing its original strength and symmetry. The interests of the nation are best to be promoted by the revival of fraternal relations, the complete obliteration of our past differences, and the reinauguration of all the pursuits of peace.

THE COLLIERY CATASTROPHE NEAR BARNSELY.

THIS calamity has proved to be much more terrible than was at first anticipated; indeed, we believe it has no equal in the annals of colliery accidents in Great Britain, great as has been the destruction of human life in previous catastrophes. Further explosions have occurred, and are still occurring. The most destructive of these secondary explosions took place on the morning of Thursday week, and will be found fully described below. From the local journals we extract the subjoined details of this dreadful calamity.

THE SCENE ON THE PIT BANK.

To most men and women it happens that they have to pass nights of such sorrow, or pain, or horror, that, however long they may live afterwards, their memory is never lost. But rarely can people be called upon to endure such a night as that which was passed by those who waited patiently for their dead around the Oaks pit-head during the long hours of the winter night between Wednesday and Thursday last week. Only those who waited for seven dreary days and nights on the platform at the mouth of Hartley Pit in January, 1862, can form any conception of that night as it was spent by some hundreds of men and women in the neighbourhood of the Oaks Pit. The scene at the mouth of the pit itself was one which these who witnessed it can never forget. The great platform and the buildings around it were lit up by cressets of burning coals, the flames of which rose high in the December wind. In the centre was the shaft, black and treacherous, looking as though it were some trap laid for the unwary; whilst above it towered the clumsy beams and head-gear of the cage. On the platform itself were gathered little knots of men, in curious dresses, and with faces scarcely distinguishable beneath the dust and grime. Some were leaning against the walls of the cabin, waiting until it was their turn to descend; others were watching the great black rope which ran down the centre of the shaft, and at the end of which the cage was hung; whilst one or two stood by the open chasm, with a long, ugly stretcher, hastily made of boards nailed together, lying at their feet. All around the outer edge of the platform, kept back by the barriers which had been erected, might be seen rows of faces curiously illuminated by the watch-fires—the faces of men, and women, and tender children, all turned in one direction, every eye resting on one object—the great black rope running down the shaft. Presently there comes from the engine-house the striking of a bell, and then the great rope begins slowly to glide upwards. Slowly it passes up and up until the sloping iron roof of the cage is seen, and underneath the eaves the swarthy faces of half a dozen of the volunteers coming up half dazed from the polluted atmosphere of the pit. But not upon their faces do the eager glances of those gathered around fall. At their feet, in the bottom of the cage, lies something wrapped in a shroud of white—a something which half a dozen hours ago was a man, full of man's vigour, and strength, and life. Very solemnly do the rough miners raise the shrouded form, and very tenderly do they lay it upon the stretcher and bear it away upon their shoulders down the steep path leading from the platform and into the carpenter's shed, where busy men are preparing rough deal coffins for the dead. Here the poor corpse is laid upon the table, and then its face is reverently uncovered, and men with tearful eyes—ay, you can see beneath all the grime and dirt that their eyes are sore with weeping—bend over it, and say if they know it for the face of father, or brother, or friend.

If they do, there is a sad recognition: such a recognition as takes place but seldom, and the solemnity of which every heart must feel. But, mayhap, the man is a stranger; or perchance the features are disfigured and recognition is not easy, and then the body is left lying whilst others are brought up and placed beside it. And so all through the night the work went on upon the pit platform and in the carpenter's shop.

All round the pit buildings great fires were burning, and here, trying to beat back the chill of a December night, other groups of watchers and waiters were seated; but over them all there brooded a calm to which such men are not accustomed, and every mind seemed occupied with the awful tragedy of which the place had so recently been the scene. And over the whole district the voice of lamentation could be heard. Little sleep could there have been in the villages in the neighbourhood, or even in Barnsley itself. At Hoyle Mills, a "long unlovely street" of houses, chiefly occupied by the men who worked in the Oaks Pit, death seemed to have gotten an entrance to every house, and as you passed along you saw the open door, ready to receive the dead, whilst your heart was pierced by the cry of the bereaved. Those who are now children too young to feel the full extent of this great calamity will have grown grey before the people of Hoyle Mills will have forgotten that awful night.

Some may think that it was a night of horrors only; but the pathos of the scenes which it witnessed was even greater than its horror. Even the sight of the stiffened bodies of the dead was pathetic rather than horrible. They had died in harness, poor fellows! And as each one was brought up in his loose-fitting woollen jacket, and his great rough clogs, the heart was touched in a way in which no amount of funeral pomp could have affected it. Still it was a ghastly spectacle that was presented to the watcher by the shaft, as hour after hour of the long night passed and still an unending succession of the dead was brought up out of the depths beneath. From ten to twenty, from twenty to fifty, from fifty to seventy, mounted up the score which was being kept in the carpenter's shed, and still none could tell when the solemn business would be accomplished. At length, far in the east there broke a faint glimmering of grey, and soon the stars began to pale away, and the watch fires to sink before the dawn, that presently broke in a morning of rare and unclouded beauty. Seldom can the light of day have been more welcome than it was to those who had waited round the pit so patiently throughout the night.

THE SECOND EXPLOSION.

At nine o'clock on the Thursday morning the catastrophe was rendered additionally terrible by another accident. The pit fired again! At the time many of those who had been on the platform all night were absent from the spot. A correspondent, in describing this second scene of calamity, says:—

I was slowly returning to the pit by the Barnsley-road, in the midst of a crowd of men, chiefly miners, who were also going to the same spot. I was within about a quarter of a mile of the colliery, and within half sight of the buildings at the shaft, when I was suddenly startled by a cry from a man in front of me. It was a cry of the wildest alarm, and, looking up, I saw turned on me the face of a pitman, white and horror-stricken. "It's fired again!" he gasped out from between his trembling lips; but ere the words had fairly left his mouth, the air was rent by an awful sound, the like of which I had never heard before. It was not like the heavy crack of artillery or the roll of thunder. It was a dull, muffled, long-continued boom, in the very sound of which there seemed something that was unnatural—something that shook the nerves and carried terror to the heart. I looked towards the pit buildings lying in the valley before me under the bright morning sun, and, as I did so, I saw suddenly rising out of the two shafts lying close together, and out of the cupola, some distance to the left, an immense black cloud that slowly ascended in the form of an inverted cone, and spread long over the spot ere the fresh breeze dispersed it. Like everybody else on the road, I quickened my steps, but at the same moment I was arrested by another sound. I was passing by a row of cottages, when suddenly and, as it seemed, simultaneously, the doors of all were thrown open, and from each there rushed screaming women. They were the wives of volunteers working in the pit. As they looked towards the colliery and saw the great black pall which hung in the sky above it, they threw up their hands in horror, and gave vent to piercing, thrilling shrieks of terror, some of them falling to the ground half-fainting, others staggering towards the pit as fast as their trembling limbs would carry them. It was an awful spectacle of misery and despair—one which must have been seen to have been appreciated in all its horror. I hurried on towards the pit, where even a more thrilling scene was presented to my eyes. With few exceptions, the volunteers who had hitherto borne up so nobly seemed to have been completely unnerved by the terrible disaster that had befallen their comrades. Some were weeping like children, the hot tears tracing broad channels on their blackened faces; others, seated in all the attitudes in which artists are wont to depict despair, were rocking themselves to and fro, shaking their heads as in mournful certainty of the fate of those whose places they had so lately occupied. The scene was one of panic and despair, and every face showed how terrible was the shock which this second calamity had produced.

When I ascended to the platform I found the traces of the second explosion still fresh around me. The platform itself was completely covered with soot and pieces of rope, cloth, and wood, which had been hurled up by the force of the explosion. The signal wires running down the shaft had been broken, and were hanging in tangled masses round the head-gear; whilst the iron roof of the cage in which the men had so lately been ascending and descending was crumpled up like a piece of paper. But already Mr. Dymond and the gentlemen who were assisting him were taking measures to ascertain, as far as possible, the fate of those who had been searching for the dead at the time the second explosion occurred. And, first of all, the signal-wires were drawn out of the shaft; next the cage, which had not been far from the surface when the explosion took place, was cautiously raised; and then followed a scene more thrilling than any that the most exciting "sensation drama" could present.

All round the pit-buildings were gathered panic-stricken men, awaiting the next act in this awful tragedy. On the platform itself there were only half a score or so of those more immediately connected with the colliery, and amongst those there were no traces of the panic which seemed to have taken possession of the greater number of those below. Presently, amongst these half score on the platform, Mr. Dymond stepped forward with uplifted hand, and commanded all to preserve the strictest silence—and all were immediately silent. Then two of the workmen lay down at full length at the edge of the shaft, with their heads over the side, and together they raised a loud and long halloo, that went echoing down the sides of the fatal pit. There was a pause that seemed to last for minutes, and again the shout was raised; but there only came back from the pit the long-drawn echoes of the call, and then all was silent as the grave. Then it was known that there was no hope for the brave men who had been in the pit when the second explosion took place, and slowly and mournfully the owners and the assembled viewers withdrew to consult together at the colliery offices.

Orders were given that the pit platform should be cleared, as it was not at all improbable that another explosion might take place. Accordingly, most of the persons near the mouth of the shaft moved away; but a few still remained and watched the operation of running the cage up and down, which was then being performed. When first it was lowered to the bottom, it was allowed to remain there a few minutes, and then it was brought quickly to the surface, in the hope—the faintest of faint hopes—that some might have been living at the bottom and might have crawled into it. But it only came up empty and dripping wet from the dreary depths. I had just left the shaft and had proceeded about a score of yards from it, when, at ten o'clock precisely, a third explosion took place, equal in violence to that which had occurred an hour before. The ground in the neighbourhood was shaken by the shock, and again there was the shower of smoke and soot. This time, too, the cage, which had been ascending at the moment of the explosion, was caught up by the blast and hurled completely out of the shaft and over the wheel of the head-gear, on the off side of which it hung, disfigured and useless. It hardly required this third catastrophe to complete the disheartening of all who were interested in the progress of the work. Yet its dull reverberation fell like a knell upon the ears of all who heard it. It showed how useless any further attempts to resume the search would be.

THE SEARCH FOR THE BODIES.

Plenty of willing hands joined heartily in the dangerous task, and in the course of the Wednesday evening and night more than one hundred men were thus employed. One of the most affecting scenes which the persons so engaged came upon was the discovery of more than twenty men nearly the whole of whom were locked in each other's arms. They had faced death together, and had carried the friendship of life to the very threshold of the grave. Others had evidently been swept away while taking leave of each other; and in the terror and confusion of the moment others had still remembered to appeal to the mercy of their God. Not a few were thus found in the attitude of prayer. A more awful spectacle than that presented to the searchers could hardly be found, even on a battle-field. Horses, coal-tubs, and, in some cases, men and lads, were heaped together in one confused mass; and some of the bodies were so much disfigured—more by dirt than mutilation—that their

friends could hardly recognise them; some had to be identified by a button, or a shoe, or some part of their tattered garments. By midnight nearly fifty bodies had been brought to the surface; and the dense and increasing throng at the pit bank took a painfully-excited interest in the duty of identifying the bodies. At times the bodies were brought up so rapidly that the space reserved for them at the pit mouth was quite crowded, and as relatives and friends claimed the dead they were carted away, covered with blankets, and in many cases followed by weeping women and children.

A miner who formed one of the searching party after the first explosion, and who escaped from the second one, said at the inquest:—

We went on till we came upon the body of Edward Cartwright. A few yards from him, further into the workings, we came upon "a pair," two brothers—Joe and Thomas Leather. A piece further on we came on three more: those I don't know. On we went till we came upon a stretch. Mr. Sugden and I were last of the party, and then we thought it safest to turn about. Mr. Sugden, being an old man, was again behind, and I looked back for him. He was ever so far off, so I stayed till he came up, and then said, "Hey up! Can you manage?" He said, "Let me get up to you, and I think I can." We got to the pit bottom, and he is there now. I jumped into the cage (hearing the rumbling noise in the pit) just as it was rising in the shaft, and the last thing I saw of them was that Mr. Sugden and Mr. Trewhitt, our underground steward, were talking together at the bottom. I heard some one say, before I left them, "Come, you men, you have no occasion to be frightened; it's only a fall of roof." Up to this time, you see, we had been carrying bodies forward to the pit bottom. There were four of us carrying a body when the thundering (rumbling) in the pit commenced. We saw there was danger, so we dropped the body and ran to the bottom. As we left Mr. Sugden and Mr. Trewhitt, I saw Mr. Trewhitt doing this (beating his breast), and I heard him say, "God help us, men, we are done!" That was about a quarter to ten o'clock. We had just reached the mouth of the pit when the blast followed, and sent the chair slap up against the head gear. I knew it was all over with those below. We had a wonderful escape.

Another witness said:—

When the danger pressed us, the men in our gang turned round, and were about to run away, when Minto pressed us back and said there was no danger. We stood a minute, and then we felt something coming. Old Mr. Sugden shouted out to us, "Cave ye down, men (sit ye down, men); if there is a bit of clear air, let it have a clear course; and, after sitting there a minute, something came upon us as hot as fire, and the old man (Mr. Sugden) cried out, "Oh, Lord, we're all done!" I got out all right.

The heroism disclosed in the reports of the second explosion at the Oaks Colliery has never been surpassed in the history of human self-sacrifice or self-devotion. Mr. Jeffcock, a mining engineer, for example, who had volunteered to aid in the search, was repeatedly urged to make good his escape; but he would not desert his companions, and took his chance with the rest, the result being that immediately after the cage into which he might have entered had reached the pit's mouth, he and many other brave men perished in the second fatal explosion.

RESCUED FROM THE GRAVE.

Of those left in the pit at the time of the second explosion one man only has been recovered, and his marvellous escape is one of the many strange incidents that such a catastrophe as this brings in its wake. During the night policemen kept guard around the pit mouth, by the light of numerous blazing watchfires. One of the officers, about four o'clock in the morning, was startled by hearing the bell at the bottom of the pit ring. Hitherto the most intense silence had prevailed, and the man was not a little startled at the unexpected summons from a place where none but the dead were supposed to be. Shaking off his terror, the policeman gave the alarm, and some workmen quickly ran to the spot. They called down the black abyss; but there was no reply. They then lowered a bottle of brandy, and upon drawing up the cord found that there was nothing at the end of it. Convinced that there was a fellow-creature needing succour, two bystanders descended to the bottom, and their labours were speedily rewarded by success, for they rescued a poor fellow who had been a prisoner amongst the dead for some eight hours. He was very weak and terror-stricken, but not seriously injured. He was one of the brave volunteers who were overtaken by the second explosion, and he alone was left to tell the fate of his companions. So far as can be gathered from his story, he crept into a recess (a "pick-hole") when he heard the explosion, and the fatal blast passed him by. He was afraid to move until a glimmer of light from above revealed to him the bell-handle, and he then lost no time in using it. His account of the heaps of corpses he stumbled over, the awful silence of the pit, and the general aspect of desolation and destruction, fully bears out all the imaginary horrors that have been indulged in.

With respect to the cause of the accident, the public had better defer judgment until something official is known. At present nothing can be elicited from the people about the colliery. Some attribute the original explosion to an exposed Stephenson's lamp, some to a reckless use of gunpowder, some to gaslights used in the main road in the colliery. All are conjectures, and may probably ever remain so. According to investigations made by a committee of colliers, book-keepers, &c., not fewer than 400 lives have been sacrificed.

RELIEF FOR THE SUFFERERS.

A subscription has been opened for the relief of the surviving sufferers by this awful calamity. Her Majesty has already contributed £200; handsome donations have been made in the locality; and in London the Lord Mayor has opened a subscription list, and liberal contributions are rapidly pouring in.

A RAILWAY BLOCK AT CHRISTMAS.

"TIME, tide—and railway trains—wait for no man." What a preposterously false addition to the old proverb. The five o'clock down train to Stopford waited exactly two minutes and three quarters for old Hunklesby, as I have very good reason to know and to be glad of; for it gave me the opportunity of saying a dozen words to Violet, and of hearing two score words in reply; and those two score words made all the difference in life to me, I can tell you. Her father, whose name I needn't mention here, was deep in the evening paper, which he was reading by the light of a patent railway reading-lamp in the further corner of the carriage; and old Hunklesby was at the refreshment-counter, fumbling for change to pay for a glass of cherry-brandy which he had just swallowed. All the rest of the party—by which I mean Violet's father's party, not my party, for I was lonely and altogether partless—that is to say, Tom Brandon and Emily, who was Violet's sister; and her brothers Harry and Bob, one from Rugby and the other from a mercantile house in London; and old Mrs. Appledore, their aunt—had already taken their seats; and I fancy they thought that it was Vi who had been drinking the cherry-brandy at old Hunklesby's expense, for "the thing was as good as settled," and it was fully expected that it would be finally concluded during the Christmas holidays at Beechurst, where Hunklesby had accepted an invitation to spend a week. Violet's father thought that it would be a capital match, for, after all, Hunklesby was not particularly old; he was one of those men who are called "old," not as a term of affection and endearment, but because he was fussy, and selfish, and exacting; and, like the gentleman in "Pickwick" who was fond of muffins, "had no bosom friend except a hareskin, and put his feet into patent indiarubber fire-buckets in wet weather."

So Violet and I had above two minutes all to ourselves; and we made such good use of them that, when she snatched her dear little hand from mine and jumped into their comfortable first-class "engaged" compartment, with no end of rugs and foot-warmers, I took a glow with me into my cold, solitary second-class cattle-pen, not without the added satisfaction of seeing old Hunklesby hustled headforemost into a carriage lower down, while the train was moving, before he had time to remonstrate and in spite of his frantic signals that he was being waited for elsewhere.

The snow had been falling in town all day, and had been trodden into slush, so that the roadways were lakes of mud and the pavements difficult to walk upon; but here the flakes lay, and the drift had filled up the hollows, and our train was like a toy ornament on the top of a great twelfth-cake.

My elder brother was in India; my uncle, who was also our trustee, a rather cynical bachelor, who seldom came to town, lived at a shooting-box where I was now going to pay him a

visit, and always gave me to understand that, though he was glad to see me, he wasn't a man of property, and couldn't hold out any expectations of leaving me a legacy. I think I put an end to that sort of remark by telling him that, as I'd always looked forward to his marrying his cook, he needn't grieve over my probable disappointment in case he concluded that alliance at once. He laughed a grimmish sort of laugh at this, and said that I was an impudent young beggar; but that I could come down and see him now and then, at all events—say at Christmas time; that he could afford to give me a capital bottle of wine, a bed, and a good dinner, and that he should be glad to see me, which was more than he would say to ten men out of his hundred and thirty-nine acquaintances.

I had lived an almost solitary life in chambers for some time past. The only case I had had was one in which the business of the court was suddenly interrupted by my client, an eccentric old lady, who was defendant in a charge of assault for trespass. She took objection to my mode of stating the defence, and threw her shoes at me as a gentle hint for me to mind what I was about. You will see, therefore, that I had few except gloomy prospects, and the view through that window corresponded with them closely. I'd been at the house of Violet's father often enough; not at Beechurst, but in town. I had the entrée there, because, as the old gentleman was a widower, and his married daughter managed all the dinner parties for him, and the evenings for her sisters, and as her husband was my particular friend, I was down on their list. We had met, Violet and I, just as people are always meeting in London at all sorts of houses, and I fancy her sister favoured my suit. I think everything might have gone right but for that confounded old Hunklesby turning up. Not that I had any idea how I should begin housekeeping, or what I could possibly say to her father when he asked me into his private room, where he kept his collection of boots and a bookcase.

I'd never been at Beechurst, though it was only five miles from Stopford Minor, where my uncle Tom's land was; and when I once asked that amiable old cynic whether he was on visiting terms there, and told him that I thought of calling, he burst out laughing, said that he'd heard all about my infernal folly, and warned me not to drag him into it, for he'd "none of it."

We used to correspond now and then, Violet and I. She sent her notes to me at chambers, and I left mine at a certain pastrycook's in charge of a charming young creature in pink ribbons and a lace tucker, who looked like an animated bon-bon or motto kiss. I knew, therefore, that Violet and all the family, "including a certain horrid person," as she said, were to spend their Christmas at Beechurst, where a large party was to be invited. Mrs. Armitage, her married sister, could not be present for domestic reasons (I had seen the reasons in the shape of liliputian articles of dress in course of preparation when I went to smoke a cigar with Armitage a week before), and that she should be "all alone, and not like dear Emily, who would be, oh, so happy!"

I'd had a short note from Uncle Tom saying, "If you care to come down for Christmas, I shall be as lonely as Diogenes; but I've some excellent claret, and a patent breech-loader, a new cook, a waggon load of beech-wood billets from London—they don't cut them here—and I'll give you as warm a welcome as you have any reason to expect from a withered old stump like me." Whether Violet's note influenced me I don't know, but I remembered that there was at least a chance of healthy exercise, and of a jolly quiet evening or two at Stopford Minor, and so I found myself at the railway station, to go by that five o'clock train. There I was all alone in my glory—monarch of nothing whatever that I surveyed, whirling through a snowstorm at fifteen miles an hour, and smoking at a rate that corresponded with my rapidly-changing fancies. I don't know into what aerial castle I had double-locked myself—but, if aerial castles have dungeons, it must have been to that gloomy apartment that I had been consigned—when I heard a scissoring noise, felt the carriage quiver, and was conscious of a great creaking and whistling, after which the train stopped. There was no station; nothing to be seen but a great waste of snow, a few trees, and the red reflection of the furnace fire upon the white ground ahead. Presently I saw the guard's lantern gleaming close by the carriage window. The man was trying to open the frozen door.

"Snowed up, Sir. Reg'lar blocked. All passengers for Stopford had better get out an' walk. We don't make it more than four mile, an' it'll take four hours good to clear away here, just at the dip, you see, Sir; where there's sure to be a drift."

I jumped out directly, in the hope that I might have another word with Violet before I gave her up finally to old Hunklesby. I could, at all events, offer her my fur cloak; it was the only valuable article of dress I had, and had been given me by a bankrupt client to whom I communicated advice gratis.

The party in the first-class carriage was in confusion. Papa had dropped his spectacles, and was groping about for them with the aid of his railway reading-lamp. Tom Brandon and Emily were getting ready for the march, she clinging so lovingly to his arm and he looking so proud and confident, that they made quite a pretty picture when the glare from the guard's bull's-eye fell upon them. Tom and Harry, having nobody to look after but themselves, were busy taking a nip apiece from a case bottle before "lighting up;" and Mrs. Appledore was beseeching somebody to look after her luggage. Nobody knew what had become of old Hunklesby; and, to tell the truth, I had forgotten all about him for the one brief moment that I was engaged in fastening my fur cloak round Violet's neck. I think she forgot all about old Hunklesby, too; for she held my arm so tight that before I knew what I was about I found myself walking off with her.

"Bravo, Charley!" said Tom Brandon, from behind. "Go in and win, old fellow, and let Hunklesby go to the deuce!"

"Most extraordinary thing!" gasped the old gentleman. "Couldn't find Hunklesby; and where on earth Violet's got to!"

"Here I am, papa," piped Violet from under the thick fur collar. "I'm all wrapped up so that you can't see me; and this is Mr. —, who is almost frozen for want of his cloak."

I stood well enough with Violet's father to receive his thanks and a sort of hesitating invitation to his house at Beechurst, but he looked a little uneasy. We had company on the road, for there were a good many passengers bound for Stopford and the neighbourhood, but we saw no sign of Mr. Hunklesby. Perhaps he had missed us and was trying the short cut across the fields, where he would inevitably lose himself. Tom and Harry started off and went back to look for him. Of course, I couldn't leave Beechurst till their return; and it was late at night when they made their appearance, quite fagged out. They had been over all the ground round the place where the train had stopped, but there were no traces of old Hunklesby.

"We can't leave him to perish," said the old gentlemen. "Heaven bless us! what is to be done?"

"I'll go and look for him," said I.

"Oh, don't!" sobbed Violet. "You'll both be gone then."

"No—no, darling," I said; for I had grown quite bold and careless. "I'll be back before daylight. I've a capital notion. Can you lend me a horse to ride over to my uncle's?" I asked the old gentleman. "If you can, I'll mount his old grey mare; she knows every inch of the country; and, if he will go with me, and take Carlo, we shall be sure to find old Hunklesby."

"Mister Hunklesby," said Harry, sternly correcting me.

"Well, Mister, if you like; only look sharp, and tell them to put a saddle on something."

"You'll take my brandy-flask," said Tom.

"You won't go without your cloak?" said Violet, and she put it on for me. It was large enough to cover us both, and so, as she fastened the collar, reaching up on tiptoe to make that troublesome clasp meet—well, never mind what took place. I was as warm as June when I climbed into the saddle and thudded down the snow-padded road to uncle Tom's.

How the old cynic did laugh, to be sure; but he was with me in no time, for he said it would be rare sport to "draw old Hunklesby." Carlo bounded on before us, skipping and circling round and round, baring his rough, black, curly head in the snow, and sweeping a

little miniature drift with his bushy tail. The moon was up; the air was clear and crisp. I never had a merrier or a more exciting ride; but we came upon no tracks, though uncle Tom crossed and recrossed the ground, and "hied!" and "chivied!" and view-ballooned! until, if anybody heard him, they must have thought he had been out anticipating Christmas. At last, we pushed on to the road further away, inquired at every cottage, stopped at every alehouse, left messages and descriptions, and promised rewards; but all to no purpose. It was grey dawn before I reached Beechurst—the horse dead lame, myself sorely tired—after I had left my companion laughing in bed, with a warm posset, and Carlo asleep upon the rug outside his door. Another day passed, and consternation reigned in the family. It was very awkward. The old gentleman began to look black at me, as though I had made away with Hunklesby. I determined to have another try and go round to see whether a body had been found anywhere in the snow.

When I got to my Uncle Tom's he was in bed with a sharp attack of rheumatism; but he laughed when I came into the room, as though he regarded rheumatism as an exquisite practical joke. I was in a darkish temper, and wanted to know what the deuce there was to laugh at; but he only laughed all the more, and declared that I shouldn't go out that night but must stay and play at piquet with him; so we had up some of his blue seal and a silver saucapan and made "a mull," and I satisfied myself that if Hunklesby had been lost he must be dead by that time, and I might as well go out to look for him by daylight.

"You go over to Beechurst, you precious young unmarriedable blunderer," said my relative, when I knocked at his door the next morning, "and you'll hear something about poor Hunklesby's body. It's been found."

"He was lost in the snow, then?" I said, gloomily. "Poor fellow!"

"Oh, yes; he lost himself somewhere about Bollybridge."

"What do you mean; that's eleven miles off—station before Stopford?"

"I know that; but that's where he's found;" and my uncle broke into a fit of his unseemly laughter, so that he had to leave off shoving.

I noticed that he had his best morning suit laid out, and that his man had brought out his patent-leather boots.

"Look here, Charley," he said, gravely, "go you to Beechurst, and I will come there to you before dinner-time. Give my compliments to the old gentleman, and say I shall do myself the honour of calling on him. I know I'm a fool for my pains, but I can see you'll do no good there without me. I have an appointment here at twelve with Lord Carrytop, of the Colonial Currency and Carpet-Bag Office; and so good-by, my dear fellow! Diogenes will come out of his tub for once, and respectability shall be his portion."

I could not make my uncle Tom out; but I knew it was no use to question him, so I took a long walk before going to Beechurst, and, when I arrived there, found the family in dire confusion—Paterfamilias, in a red-hot fury, standing on the hearthrug, with an open letter in his hand.

"Any news of Mr. Hunklesby?" said I, with a general and inclusive bow, as I entered.

"Yes—no—confound him! Oh! the mean wretch! Let him dare to show his face here again! So much the better! What the deuce can we do in the matter?—can't thrash him, you know." This was the chorus that greeted me, amidst which Papa, with every hair on his head bristling and his eyes aflame, handed me the open letter:—

"My Very Dear Sir,—You will doubtless be surprised that I should not have presented myself, as expected, amidst your domestic circle, and I fear that my absence may be productive of some anxiety. Believe me, both Miss Pyphott and myself, as also Miss Pyphott's brother, whose acquaintance I have just made, are most desirous to remove it. I learned at Bollybridge station that the line was probably snowed up, and, in my extremely delicate state of health, may be excused for having regarded exposure to such an accident with some foreboding. Miss Pyphott, to whom I shall be happy to introduce your charming family on some auspicious occasion, most kindly and considerately offered me the use of her carriage, and we drove together to her hospitable abode, where I am at present treated with a consideration which precludes the possibility of my taking my leave abruptly. You will therefore, I am sure, pardon me if I forego the pleasure of your charming society at Beechurst on Christmas Day. I am, my Very Dear Sir, yours,

"SAMUEL HUNKLESBY."

That was the letter, which I read in a subdued voice, afterwards looking round in blank dismay. Violet had come towards me, and as I concluded, her dear little head fell to my shoulder. I was compelled to put my arm round her to support her.

"What's all this, Violet? I'm—I'm ashamed of you! Where are our—where is your—I mean, what are this gentleman's prospects? What an infernal sounder that Hunklesby is!" roared the old gentleman.

"Come," said Mrs. Appledore, suddenly emerging from the sofa-cushions, with her false front hanging on the pin of her brooch and her cap hindpart before, "we've had enough of interested marriages in the family ever since I made my most mistaken venture, Richard. I've £8000, and I'll settle every penny of it on Violet if she marries the man of her choice; for I always hated old Hunklesby, and he's no better than —"

"Mr. Wycham!" said the servant, opening the door; and in limped my uncle, dressed for dinner.

"Ha! ha! my old friend!" he said to papa, shaking him heartily by the hand. "I'm *de trop*, I fear; but pray never mind me; I'm an old bachelor, you know, and so am quite used to family differences. I came to look for my nephew Charley here. Charley, you scamp, I congratulate you! Lord Carrytop has given you the vacancy; I told you I'd do something for you some day, and now you're second clerk in the Colonial Currency and Carpet-Bag Office. The post is worth a good four hundred a year, you dog, with an increase for every addition to the family, and hours from eleven till you choose to go away."

Everybody laughed. I know I did; and, by a strange coincidence, dinner being at that moment announced, I found myself by the side of Violet, and my uncle took down Mrs. Appledore, who had somehow restored her false front to its proper place and turned her cap right side foremost.

I'm married. Hunklesby isn't. He's lodging now with a widow at Tunbridge Wells for the benefit of his health.

T. A.

THE CHRISTMAS CATTLE MARKET.—Notwithstanding the severe losses sustained this year from the cattle plague, and the large sales of half-fat animals disposed of by the feeders in the early part of the season, there was more than an average number of beasts on offer for Christmas consumption on Monday. In the last three years the number of beasts were: 1864, 7030; 1865, 7530; 1866, 7340; so that it appears the supply this Christmas is but 190 less than last year, and is 310 more than the year before. In the five years previously to 1864 the supply was much greater. As regards wholesale prices, the result of the market is equally satisfactory, the lowest price being but 4d. per stone higher and the highest price 2d. per stone lower than in 1864. The retail price is the all important question to the general public, and why beef and mutton should be 3d. or 4d. higher by retail, when the wholesale price does not exceed the average of the last twenty years, is a matter on which, as the late Sir James Graham said about flour and bread, the public ought to know "the reason why."

SPANISH SHEPHERDS AT THE STATION OF THE ALICANTE RAILWAY.

In Spain the people, who in other respects adhere to all the past inconveniences of their ancestors, now avail themselves of some recent improvements; and at a railway station one may see so many costumes that the traveller is reminded of the picture in the frontispiece of the old geography book, illustrating the people of all nations and their variety of appearance. This was admirably described only a few weeks ago by the Special Commissioner of a daily paper, whose new roundabout journey had carried him to Spain; but even he, in



A RAILWAY BLOCK ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

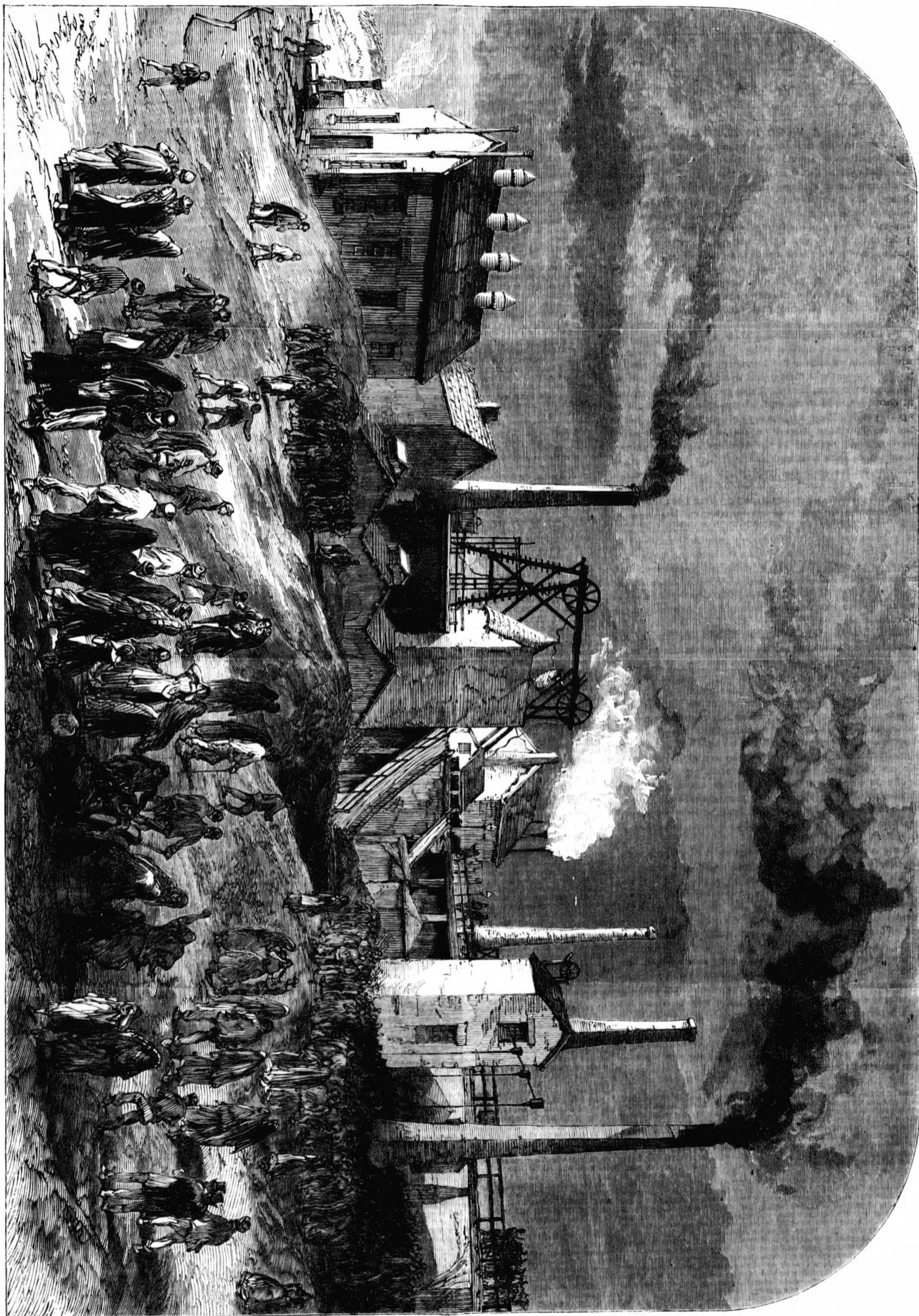
discussing of Don Quixote and Gil Blas, and the strange incongruity of that mixture of past and present in avocations, dwellings, manners, habits, and costumes which distinguishes Spain of to-day, might have borrowed a still more striking illustration from the scene which has been made the subject of our Engraving. The time of Don Quixote is

indeed far past when the shepherds, who have so long resisted even the convenience of the railway that afforded them such easy means of transit, consent to avail themselves of its advantages for transporting their long-tailed, silky flocks in the admirably-partitioned cattle-waggons of the Alicante line. And to stand on the platform

at the station and watch the wild and picturesque onion-eaters bestow their charges in the menagerie-like compartments, while they wait for the whistle of the coming engine, is to link the old world with the new in a reality which is so much like a dream as to require a picture to preserve its identity.



SPANISH SHEPHERDS AT THE STATION OF THE ALICANTE RAILWAY.



THE COLLIERY EXPLOSION AT DARNLEY: SCENE ON THE PIT BANK.—(FROM A SKETCH TAKEN HALF AN HOUR AFTER THE EXPLOSION.)

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A WORD IN SEASON.

Do we mean it? or is the fuss we make about Christmas and its associations all sham? Is it true that we are animated by a special spirit of Christian love at this season? Do we really feel charity, and kindness, and good-will towards our neighbours? Do we rejoice in their joy and share in (and try to alleviate) their sorrow? Or are we wholly given up to sensual enjoyments—to eating and drinking, song-singing, polking, tomfooling under the mistletoe, uttering sham sentiments, and paying hollow compliments? If this last be our state, 'tis pity of our lives—and souls too. But we will not believe it. It cannot be. There is, beyond all doubt, a wealth of good feeling in the collective heart of the British public which will not let suffering that can be relieved go without aid.

To all those among us—and their name is legion—who never hear a tale of distress without wishing to afford succour, whose hands are open as day to melting charity, we say, "If ye feel pity for the suffering, and sympathy with the sorrowful, prepare to prove it now. Those poor widows and orphans at Barnsley and in North Staffordshire have powerful claims upon you. They are, many of them, left alone in the world, without friend or stay. Their breadwinners have suddenly perished in the dark and dangerous mine—their hearths have been made cold and dark by the death of fathers, and husbands, and brothers, while toiling to provide the means of light and warmth for the Christmas homes of England. Ye cannot restore those they have lost; but ye can help to make the pangs of the bereavement less acute by taking care that want follow not on the heels of sorrow. Out of your own plenty ye can spare somewhat. And well we know ye will do it." Yes, there are the usual indications that the spirit of charity is ever wakeful in this country. The subscriptions are flowing in freely. We hope none of our readers will deprive themselves of a share in the good work. This is not a case of alms-giving; it is simply the performance of a duty.

With those, if there be any such, who hesitate, or are backward, or unwilling, or who have objections to make "on principle, you know," we care not to argue. It is enough for us to know that there is suffering in our midst, and suffering for causing which the victims are in no way to blame. Whether there is blame anywhere or not, we will not here stop to inquire. Our present purpose is to remind our readers that some hundreds of widows and orphans have been left destitute, and to urge all with whom we have any influence to stretch forth a hand to aid those who are ready to perish. We are no advocates of indiscriminating alms-giving, or of extending help to those who are able, and ought, to help themselves. We hold that every man should fight his own battle in the world. But, good friends all, widows and orphans are non-combatants, and are held to be such in warfare of all sorts.

Some of us are rich; and, though most of us, unluckily, are not, we hope each will be willing to give according to his or her means. We can all spare a little; and the mite of the widow will be as welcome, and as blessed, to her suffering sister as the munificence of Dives the millionaire. Let each do well in his degree, and no fear but the work will be done well. The Lord Mayor at the Mansion House will thankfully receive all donations, be they great or small. We have surely said enough. No work could be more appropriate to the character with which we profess to invest the present season; and we trust that the true Christian spirit will distinguish the way in which the work is performed.

With this brief "word in season," we wish to all "A Merry Christmas!" especially to those who have earned the right to enjoy it by promptly acting as we—and their own hearts—have prompted them.

RITUALISM.—Lord Shaftesbury writes:—"It is said, and truly said, that the laity have the power in their own hands. No doubt; but will they come forward and exercise it? Will they address their Bishops, memorialise their clergy, leave no abuse unnoticed, sustain one another, and sink all minor differences to subserve the common cause? If they will do this we shall be secure. If, from a variety of reasons, they decline to do so, a miracle alone, and nothing less, will save the Reformation in Great Britain."

THE COBDEN STATUE.—The operation of casting a bronze statue, to be erected in Manchester to perpetuate the memory of the late Mr. Cobden, was successfully carried out on Tuesday at the Phoenix Ironfoundry of Messrs. Prince and Co., Southwark. The statue is from the studio of Mr. Marshall Wood, is of colossal dimensions, being 10 ft. high, and represents the eminent statesman in modern costume in the attitude of addressing an assemblage. The work of mixing with molten copper the due proportion of tin, zinc, and lead in a huge cauldron was witnessed by a few friends of the firm and by the artist's own party. The weight of metal used is about two tons and a quarter. This, when drawn at white heat from the furnace, was raised by means of a crane to the height of a massive frame in which the mould was embedded, and was then gently poured from the cauldron. The seething mass ran in an even stream through the surface trough like liquid lava, and in a few seconds the work of casting was complete. The mould will be left undisturbed for a day or two in order to allow the metal to become cool; but it will be some weeks before the statue is entirely free from the superincumbent material of the casting.

SAYINGS AND DOINGS.

THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON has distributed to the Cabinet Ministers a quarto volume containing some observations of his own concerning the army administration.

THE EMPRESS CHARLOTTE is by no means better in mind, while her bodily health begins to suffer seriously. She can with difficulty be induced to take any food.

THE INHABITANTS OF HAMPSHIRE have resolved on legal proceedings to contest threatened building encroachments on Hampstead Heath.

SIR WILLIAM ERLE retired from the Bench on the very same day of the month on which, forty-seven years before, he was called to the Bar, Nov. 26, 1819.

THE GRAND DUKE OF OLDENBURG is to receive 1,000,000 thalers and a piece of land as compensation for the abandonment of his claims to the Elbe duchies.

FATHER GAVAZZI, it is said, has mysteriously disappeared. He was last heard of as being present with a portion of the Italian army moving against Austria in Venetia.

VICE-ADMIRAL THE HON. SIR HENRY KEPPEL, K.C.B., has been nominated to succeed Rear-Admiral George St. V. King, C.B., Commander-in-Chief in China. The gallant Admiral will shortly hoist his flag on board the Rodney, 80 guns, fitting out at Sheerness.

THE GRAND DUKE OF HESSE has prohibited a pamphlet advocating German unity under Prussian auspices.

M. VICTOR HUGO is said to be building a theatre near his residence in Guernsey, where two unperformed plays by him, "Torquemada" and "La Grand'mère," are to see the footlights.

CAPTAIN SIR JAMES ANDERSON, of the Great Eastern, was, on Friday week, in recognition of his services in laying the Atlantic cable, presented with the freedom of the ancient burgh of Dumfries, of which place he is a native.

HERR VON DREYSE, the inventor of the needle-gun, has presented to the King of Prussia the pattern of a new weapon, said to be much more efficient in its character.

THE SOCIETY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY has offered a banquet to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, on his arrival in Paris about the middle of next month.

UPWARDS OF 150,000 PERSONS paid for admission to the Smithfield Cattle Show.

THE FRENCH COUNCIL OF ADVOCATES has decided that to be a member of the Jockey Club is incompatible with the profession of a barrister.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE LONDON CORN EXCHANGE have resolved that that establishment shall be closed on Monday, the 24th, the day preceding Christmas Day.

DR. HENRY JEAFFRESON, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, was the gentleman who fell a victim to typhus fever, and not Dr. Horace Jeafrason, of the Fever Hospital, as stated in our last Number.

THE FRENCH CHAMBERS will meet in February. The Emperor's speech is expected to be highly pacific, industrial, and commercial in tone, out of compliment to the great Exhibition of 1867.

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT has opened a 5 per cent loan of £600,000 for subscription. This is inferred to be for the purpose of meeting the expenditure in connection with the Orissa famine.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE BRITISH CHARITABLE FUND OF PARIS publish a warning to operatives against going to Paris in search of employment on the Exhibition works without previous engagement. They cannot relieve cases of distress preferred by unsuccessful applicants.

A STEAM-ROLLER has at last been set to work in the parks. It is a cumbersome-looking machine, and is worked at night. One result of its working may be seen on the Kensington side of Hyde Park, where some newly-laid granite has been transformed by it into a smooth and compact mass.

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RARITY, the library of Ludovico Manini, the last Doge of Venice, will be brought to the hammer at Leipzig in the course of January next. It contains 2358 works, many of them of great historical interest.

SOME CELTIC REMAINS have been recently discovered on Dartmoor. The foundations of an aboriginal village of some fifty dwellings have been uncovered, and slabs of stone have been found having depressions on their surfaces evidently intended for making castings in metal.

MR. JOS. DICKENS, of the Saracen's Head, near Holbeach, has just discovered a mouse's nest in his garden, in which a winter's store of 1829 flint nuts had been secreted by the industrious little animal. They measured half a peck, and weighed 6 lb.

THE TASMANIAN, West India mail-steamer, arrived off Southampton, has yellow fever on board. There have been ninety-six cases. Five persons died at St. Thomas and twenty-one since leaving that place. Among these was the surgeon of the ship. The others were all firemen or sailors. Four more men are not expected to live.

GENERAL SHERIDAN, in his report to the United States War Department, speaks warmly of the disgraceful state of civil affairs in Texas, where he declares it to be his opinion "that the trial of a white man for the murder of a freedman would be a farce." He calls the French invasion of Mexico "a part of the Rebellion;" and regrets that the United States Government did not long ago compel the Imperial troops to evacuate the country.

THE SHIP CHICHESTER was inaugurated, on Tuesday, as a home for destitute boys. We intend to illustrate this interesting event in our next week's Number.

MR. GARTH, Conservative, has been elected to fill the vacancy in the representation of Guildford caused by the elevation of Sir William Bovill to the Bench.

HANDEL'S ORATORIO, "THE MESSIAH," will be given on Christmas Eve, at Exeter Hall, by the National Choral Society, under the direction of Mr. G. W. Martin. This will be the only time Mr. Santley will appear in "The Messiah" this Christmas at Exeter Hall. Miss Louisa Pyne and other eminent artists are also engaged. Band and chorus nearly 700.

THE POLICE CONSTABLES charged with assaulting Mr. Crampton, in Clerkenwell, have been convicted, and sentenced to three months' hard labour each.

A MARBLE BUST OF THE LATE LORD PALMERSTON, by Mr. M. Edwards, of London, has just been placed in the Townhall, Tiverton.

HOME FOR LITTLE BOYS.—On Saturday last a meeting of the subscribers to this institution was held in the London Tavern—Mr. Sheriff Lyceett in the chair. The principal business was the election of five boys to be residents of the home, the foundation-stone of which was laid a short time since by the Princess of Wales. The new buildings, it is expected, will be ready for occupation early in the ensuing summer. An offer to raise the cost of an additional home among children having been made, a fifth house, in addition to the school and central building, is being erected, so that there will be immediate accommodation for 150 boys. A considerable sum is still required to complete the cost of the buildings, and the committee trust that their friends will not relax their exertions, so that the buildings may be opened free of debt. Mr. Sheriff Lyceett briefly addressed those present, strongly urging the claims of the institution—which has for its object the reception, education, and industrial training of destitute boys under ten years of age from all parts of the kingdom—upon a benevolent public. There remained £4000 to be contributed before the intention of the projectors could be carried out, and, as a help to raise that sum, Mr. Lyceett put down his name for a donation of 50s.

THE LONDON CHOLERA-FIELD.—The late epidemic of cholera in London has afforded an opportunity for determining the effect of a purer water supply on the population. In 1849, when the contents of the greater part of the drains, sinks, and water-closets, together with the dejections of cholera patients of this vast city, were poured into the water used by 2,360,000 people for drinking and culinary purposes, the cholera slew 14,137 victims—viz., 1223 in the west districts, 956 in the north districts, 1724 in the central districts, 3097 in the east districts, and 7137 in the south districts, the mortality being highest in the last group, which derived its water supply at that time from the Thames as low down as Battersea and the Charing-cross Railway Bridge, where the water was most impure. The epidemic of 1854 found London, as regards its water supply, in the same situation in which it had left it in 1849, with this single exception—that the Lambeth Waterworks Company had changed their source of supply from Lambeth, where the water was most foul, to Thames Ditton; and the results of this change, in the districts supplied by this company, were recorded in a much lower rate of mortality than in the previous epidemic. The works undertaken, in accordance with an Act of Parliament, by the other companies were not completed in 1854, when the cholera destroyed 10,738 lives in London—viz., 2051 in the west districts, 779 in the north districts, 644 in the central districts, 1569 in the east districts, and 6755 in the south districts. By the Act of Parliament the several companies were prohibited from obtaining supplies from the tidal waters of the Thames and Lea after certain fixed dates in 1855, 1856, and 1857; and in the epidemic of 1866 the effect of a purer supply became evident, the deaths by cholera in London to 10,000 inhabitants being 62 in 1849, 43 in 1854, and 18 in 1866. The deaths to 10,000 living in the west districts in each of the three epidemics were 34, 51, and 4; in the north districts 20, 15, and 6; in the central districts 44, 16, and 9; in the east districts 66, 29, and 64; and in the south districts 120, 87, and 8, the mortality being greatly in excess in 1866 in the districts supplied chiefly by the East London Company from the River Lea. It is gratifying, however, to learn that the Commissioners appointed by Government, in commencing their inquiries into the pollution of rivers, have selected the Lea and its tributaries as the first in the order of importance; for it appears that the sewage of Luton, Hertford, and Norfolk into the water, which is afterwards used for domestic purposes. The East London Company, it is stated, were exceedingly anxious for an inquiry, and had made an application to the Government on the subject.

THE LOUNGER AT THE CLUBS.

THAT astonishing man Mr. William Ferrand has lately been talking to the Conservative Working Man's Association at Bradford; and, for the amusement of your readers, I present them with two extracts from his speech there:—"I have sat," he said, "listening to John Bright and Mr. Gladstone for hours, and amazed and confounded have I been to see them prostituting one of the greatest gifts which they could receive at the hands of the Almighty to the worst purposes." To which one may say, in the words of Horace translated, "Change but the name, and the story may be applied to you Mr. Ferrand." But here is another extract, quite as characteristic, because quite as untrue:—"Lord Derby's bill of 1859 would have enfranchised some two or three hundred educated, frugal, industrious working men; but these are the very men that Mr. Bright did not wish to be enfranchised." Mr. Ferrand was, as you will remember, returned for Devonport at the last general election; but, happily, was unseated on petition. I say happily, for really it is not creditable to the British Parliament to have in it such a man as Mr. Ferrand. And yet one cannot but remember that Mr. Ferrand's wild, unscrupulous, I might almost say insane, nonsense was often cheered rapturously by the Conservative gentlemen around him. I have, however, sometimes thought that these gentlemen did not cheer because they approved of his statements, but rather in a spirit of fun, to egg him on to still further extravagance. There was something in the tone of the cheering which indicated this. Moreover, it was noticeable that Ferrand always got most cheers after dinner, when men, especially young men, as by a natural law, are most disposed for fun.

Most of our manufacturers make articles of different qualities, which different qualities are known to the public by different marks. Thus, the brewers have their single X and XX, or even XXX; and no respectable brewer would think of committing the fraud of branding the cask of Swipes with XX. The manufacturers, though, of our scholars at Oxford it seems always do this. At Oxford there are two different examinations, pass and class: the one very slight and the other exceedingly severe. But, nevertheless, all Oxford men are branded alike—viz., with M.A., whether they go through the trifling-pass or the severe-class examination. But, you will say, surely even the minor examination winnows out the dunces and insures that all who are branded are learned? or, say, sufficiently learned. But how can this be, when the pass examination is not nearly so severe as the matriculation examination of the University of London—that is to say, the candidate for admission into the University of London is more severely tested than the candidate for a degree is at Oxford? But on this hear what the *Pall Mall Gazette* says; and if you are not satisfied with that, consult the Oxford guide-book, "Pass and Class," by Montague Burrows, M.A., the Chichele Professor of Modern History. The *Pall Mall* says:—"In general society, if it appears that the newly-fledged graduate is certainly supremely ignorant in all matters of politics, business, geography, and science, and cannot read a French book, even with the help of a dictionary, at any rate it is taken for granted that he knows all about Greece and Rome, could hold a conversation in Latin with a foreign ecclesiastic, could write a Latin epitaph with ease, and has the exploits of Julius Cæsar in Gaul and Britain at his fingers' ends. Such is the notion; but what is the fact? The fact is that of the hundreds of youths who are turned annually into curates at the bishops' hands, probably three quarters could not translate even the four Gospels without occasional reference to a Greek lexicon, and St. Paul's Epistles not at all; and that of the miscellaneous remainder of young bachelors and masters, not one half could write three sentences of correct grammatical Latin, and are about as capable of navigating a ship across the Atlantic as of giving you an account of the characteristics of Greek poetry and philosophy." Is not this a pretty revelation to an outsider? Here have we been under the delusion when we went to Church that at all events we had this advantage over the Dissenters—we are always sure of a learned man in the pulpit; and now it seems that it is three to one that the person cannot read the Gospels in Greek without a lexicon, and Paul's Epistles not at all. Why, the Oxford dons ought to be indicted for fraud. And, then, remember how fond these fellows are of reminding us that they have been to Oxford. How often, Mr. Editor, have you and I heard some of the chums at the old drum begin their stories with a "When I was at Oxford," or "When I was at Trinity," &c. In future when I hear this I shall feel it my duty to turn round upon the narrator and ask, "Pray, are you a passman or classman—Swipes or XX? for at Oxford I learn that they brand all alike." Of course, I knew before that there were passmen and classmen; but I certainly did not know that the proportion of passmen to classmen was so large until I read the *Pall Mall*, and had tested its statement by reference to Mr. Burrows's book. Nor was I aware that the pass examination is so paltry a test. Why, Mr. Editor, I will find you a man who taught himself more Latin and Greek than these fellows have whilst he was working at the loom, and in one country town two or three Dissenting ministers who will beat them hollow; for you must remember that most of our young Dissenting ministers are obliged now by their colleges to go in for a degree at the University of London, and there the testing examination is by no means a joke.

Of course you know that ex-Governor Eyre is to be tried. But have you heard that Mr. John Stuart Mill is to be the prosecutor? A committee cannot be a prosecutor, and for a time the committee found a difficulty in fixing upon one. But John Stuart Mill, from his retreat at Auvergne, telegraphed that he would prosecute. How like the man this is! Stepping thus forth will subject him to much obloquy. It may imperil his seat; but Mr. Mill, like the old Christians, "never counts the cost." What he thinks right to say, he will say; what he thinks right to do, he will do. Five hundred pounds he has subscribed to the fund, albeit he is not a rich man, and now he steps forth to undertake the office—odious in some men's eyes—of prosecutor.

It is an old saying that the Tories knock their heads against a wall, but that the Whigs build up a wall to knock their heads against. The Whigs did this when they thanked the officers of her Majesty's ships for the part which they took in suppressing the insurrection in Jamaica. The Whig Government ought, at least, to have waited till after the trial of Eyre. Perhaps some of these very men will be indicted, for it must be remembered that some horrible cruelties were proved on oath against them before the Royal Commission.

On the 26th of July last Admiral Walcott asked the President of the Board of Works, Lord John Manners, when the lions would be placed on the base of the Nelson column. Whereupon his Lordship said:—"Two of the lions are completed in bronze; another is on the eve of completion; and there is reason to hope that by the end of autumn the four lions will be established in their proper places." The House cheered this announcement; but where are the lions? The autumn is gone, the winter is come, and the lions are still conspicuous by their absence.

Just at the gift-giving season Messrs. Hancock, of Conduit-street, have brought out a novelty which will be welcomed by those who cannot afford to make costly sacrifices at the shrine of friendship and yet wish to give what is good. Messrs. Hancock have called in the aid of machinery, and are enabled to turn out ornaments in eighteen-carat gold at prices exactly half those charged for ordinary hand-wrought jewellery. The economy of production, however, appears only to extend to the actual manufacture. The designs are as tasteful and graceful as those adopted for ornaments of the costliest style. The attempt to place art (and the real metal) before the public at reasonable prices deserves the success which, of course, is the ultimate aim of Messrs. Hancock, whom, however great may be their spirit and taste, we would not for a moment accuse of being so unbusiness-like as not to look for profit from the novelty.

A correspondent, who vouches for the accuracy of his information, sends me the following statement as a specimen of the morality that obtains just now in British mercantile circles:—"Some few years ago certain independent railway companies which, owing to the ruinous system of competition then in vogue, were by no means

in a satisfactory condition, either locally or financially, agreed to amalgamate upon certain terms with a larger and, from its geographical position, more influential company. By the terms of the amalgamation the latter made itself responsible for the whole of the liabilities of the companies about to be incorporated with it, on the understanding that they were to transfer to it the whole of the securities in their control or possession. It has lately transpired (so I am informed, on what I am bound to regard as unimpeachable authority) that almost immediately previous to the Act for the amalgamation receiving the Royal assent (my informant went so far as to assert that it was only the day before), the directors of one of these companies mortgaged a great portion, if not the whole, of their surplus land (including therewith even land which had been sold by public auction by their own direction in accordance with the provisions of their Act) to certain of their own board as security to the latter for moneys advanced by them to the company. Now, Sir, if these facts are capable of proof, and I believe they can be substantiated, do they not amount to a charge of fraud as against all parties concerned? By what term would the conduct of a private trader be designated who, on the eve of bankruptcy, assigned over a very considerable portion of his property to one or more favoured creditors to the exclusion of the general body? Would not such preference be deemed, in the eye of the law, fraudulent? Undoubtedly it would. And if so, is it not quite as bad, where, not a private individual, but a company or association of persons is guilty of such malpractice as above described? Then, Sir, as such scandalous proceedings as these cannot but affect injuriously the interests of a great number of innocent persons, I submit that a searching investigation before a competent tribunal is imperatively required for the protection of the public."

THE LITERARY LOUNGER.

A word is due, and over-due, to Mr. Anthony Trollope's "Last Chronicle of Barset." We sincerely hope this experiment of his will succeed, and are sure that it ought to do so. The cover is extremely pretty, and Mr. Thomas's illustrations promise to be among the best things of the kind we have had—they are very felicitous. As to the story, it opens with an exciting situation—poor Mr. Crawley charged with stealing £20, and his daughter's love-story just opening at the same time. For the rest—to use the inevitable, though, we know, unpardonable metaphor—Mr. Trollope's foot is again on his native heather, and he triumphs! Here we are, surrounded by all the old friends with whom Mr. Trollope's Barsetshire chronicles have made us familiar; yet the story is as fresh as a Barsetshire breeze. In a word, the book is, all of it that has yet appeared, so good that we wish the "Last Chronicle of Barset" were the first, with many more to look forward to.

THE THEATRICAL LOUNGER.

The only theatrical "events" of the past ten days have been an amateur performance at the HAYMARKET THEATRE, for the benefit of the Theatrical Fund, and which served to introduce Mr. Frederic Buckstone, the son of the lessee, to the London stage; and Mr. Walter Montgomery's benefit at DRURY LANE. Mr. F. Buckstone has much of his father's unctuous humour, and, with practice, will probably develop into an excellent low comedian. With regard to the other performers on the occasion of his debut, the kindest act that I can do them is to withhold their names.

Your Theatrical Lounger has had an easy time of it during the past week. It is not customary in the theatrical world to produce many startling novelties in the course of the fortnight that precedes Christmas, and the present year has offered no exception to the rule. Dreary rehearsals of forthcoming splendours monopolise, in almost every case, the faculties of London and provincial managers. I have had an opportunity of being present at the rehearsals of the burlesque at ST. JAMES'S THEATRE, and of the pantomime at ASTLEY'S; and I am, therefore, in a position to say that the management, in both cases, have spared neither trouble nor expense in placing their respective pieces on the stage in a manner worthy of those establishments. Of the novelties at other theatres I can, generally, only speak by hearsay, which is worth nothing. I believe that there never has been such a demand for young ladies, pretty or otherwise, who can dance; and if this should meet the eye of any young lady who answers that description, she will, by applying for an engagement, bring balm to the anxious heart of at least one distracted manager. I hope that dancing ladies with a taste for philanthropy will take the hint.

At the PRINCESS'S THEATRE, I hear, "Barnaby Rudge" will be performed on Boxing Night, when Mr. George Honey, who is expressly engaged for the character, will play Miss Miggs for the first time. The fairy extravaganza by J. R. Planché, Esq., entitled "The Invisible Prince," will follow, to enable Mrs. John Wood to appear before a London public as a burlesque actress. Mr. George Honey and Miss Augusta Thomson will also act in the same extravaganza, and Miss Fanny Heywood, daughter of Mdme. Emma Heywood, will make her first appearance in London as the Princess. Entirely new scenery has been painted by Mr. F. Lloyds, and, with its costumes and dances, it is intended to present the aspect of a new piece.

The performances at the ALHAMBRA will undergo an entire change, and the new programme will include two of those spectacular ballets for which the house is now famous. These ballets are called respectively, "The Bulrush Fens and the Golden Lake; or, The Triumph of Industry," and "The Mountain Gorge; or, The Brigand's Stronghold." Not having yet seen either of these pieces, of course I can pronounce no opinion on their merits; but this I may safely say—namely, that the lovers of dancing, and "that sort of thing," are pretty sure of being gratified at the Alhambra.

ANOTHER TERRIBLE COLLIERY EXPLOSION.

ANOTHER terrible coal-pit explosion occurred, on Thursday week, in the colliery at Talke-o'-th'-Hill, near Hanley, North Staffordshire. This catastrophe, though not so destructive to life as that at Barnsley, is an event far surpassing in fatality any that has occurred in that part of the country within living memory. The company working the mine was formed under the Joint-stock Companies' Act, and began operations about ten years since, but has only lately succeeded in reaching a seam of coal which has paid profitably for working. An immense sum of money has been expended on the mine, and the company recently found a fine 8-ft. seam of Banbury coal, a seam highly charged with gas, and at all times dangerous to work. By the great care used the mine has hitherto been worked with safety. At the time of the accident about 150 men and boys were working at the 8-ft. seam, about 300 yards deep; and fifty were at work in the 7-ft. seam, some sixty yards higher up. The latter were apprised of the explosion in the 8-ft. workings by the sound of the rushing gas, which came towards them, making for the shaft like a noise of thunder. Knowing too well the meaning of the sound, these men at once hurried to the lower shaft and were drawn up in safety; but the "hooker-on," who placed them in the "cage" to ascend, having to wait to the last, was struck by the gas, forced upon a wall, and blown to pieces. Of the 150 men in the lower workings only thirteen were brought alive to the surface, and one or two of them died shortly afterwards. All the rest perished. The explosion produced a shock like that of an earthquake, and dense volumes of smoke rushed up from the pit and filled the air, so that nothing could be seen but smoke for hundreds of yards.

The most prompt and energetic measures were taken by the managers of the mine to rescue the unfortunate fellows below. Plenty of willing helpers were at hand, and, in spite of the danger from the gas still remaining in the pit, a number of men descended, many of whom were brought up shortly afterwards half suffocated, and were only restored by contact with the fresh air. The details of what has been done in the endeavour to get out the bodies from the colliery at Talke-o'-th'-Hill are melancholy enough. Up to Saturday night last eighty-four corpses had been brought to bank, and, while it is certain there are more in the pit, the number is not known. However, it seems to be beyond doubt that over 100 men and boys have perished. The cause of the explosion has been discovered. The blacksmith's

safety-lamp was found with its top off, and the flame of course at once ignited the gas. The blacksmith usually does his work close to the shaft, where there is no danger of explosion, and he is therefore enabled to use a common lamp. In this case the unfortunate man seems to have strolled into the workings with his lamp, and thus caused the explosion.

LOST SINCE LAST CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS here, but where is he,

Dearest wife, our darling boy?

For he sat upon my knee

One short year ago in joy.

And how oft you used to say

That his father's look he wore;

But his smile has pass'd away

Like sweet sunshine from the door.

While we crown the Christmas-King,

And our friendly board is spread,

And the bells with music ring,

I shall think upon the dead—

Of that apple of mine eye

In God's garden evermore,

Of that rose that bloomed to die—

Bloomed to die beside my door.

Weary of the day's turmoil,

And the stern world's fretful jar,

Homeward wending from my toil,

Bobby spied me from afar.

I could hear his gleeful shout

Ring a hundred yards or more

As he leapt in laughter out

To meet "daddy" at the door.

Gaily as a singing-bird

He would perch upon my chair,

And my inmost soul was stirr'd

When I saw him kneel at prayer;

And your earnest eyes grew wet

As the thought came flitting o'er.

"He will be an angel yet

Waiting for us at heaven's door."

Home I came one hapless night,

Of my household treasures proud;

But, alas! the awful sight—

There lay Bobby in his shroud;

Little heart for ever still'd.

It will beat to mine no more;

He was kill'd—my boy was kill'd—

While he played beside the door.

Yes, his marbly form at rest

On the blood-stained pillow lay,

With his hands cross'd o'er his breast,

While we both knelt down to pray.

Precious pet! he was the first

Tender bud our love-tree bore,

And I thought my heart would burst

When the wee box left the door.

In the churchyard grey and old

Sleeps he in a sacred spot:

I have gather'd from the mould

Just one sweet "Forget-me-not;"

And it seems to whisper mild

To my spirit sad and sore,

"Christ will not forget the child

He has beckoned from your door."

I bewail his dear sweet face,

Prattling lips and joyous song;

And the charms and frolic grace

That to childhood's hour belong.

But my scalding tear-drops roll

For the loving heart he bore,

And the yearning seraph-soul

That scar'd early from the door.

There's his headless wooden horse,

And his cart without a wheel!

Ah! they fill me with remorse,

Which no earthly balm can heal,

For I feel there's something fled

That will come again no more,

And our hearth seems cold and dead

Since we missed him from the door.

No more his pattering feet

Will be trotting out and in;

And no more the quiet street

Will resound his merry din.

Winsome Bobby lies below

The cold earth's snowy floor;

Where he sleeps the angels know,

Gentle watchers at the door.

Now memory's witching spell

Brings him back my heart to bless;

And he comes awhile to dwell,

With his tiny, fond caress,

With his dimpled cheek and smile,

With his laughter as of yore,

With his warm and winning guile,

And I clasp him at the door.

Yet methinks my Bird of Love,

While I kiss his sunny curl,

Waits for us in bliss above

By the shining gates of pearl.

Falls the rain and blows the blast,

But he feels the storm no more;

When we enter Heaven at last

He will meet us at the door.

SHELDON CHADWICK.

A MONDAY CHRISTMAS.—The Worcester Herald gives the following from the Harleian MSS., No. 2252, folio 143-4:—

If Christmas Day on Monday be,

A great winter that year you'll see,

And full of winds both loud and shrill;

But in summer, truth to tell,

High winds shall there be, and strong,

Full of tempests lasting long;

While battles they shall multiply,

And great plenty of beasts shall die.

They that be born that day, I ween,

They shall be strong each one and keen;

He shall be found that stealth and aught;

Tho' thou be sick, thou diest not.

Here, it is said, are three prophecies—the wind which lasted from January to well on in May, the war which ended at Sadown, and the rinderpest—all fulfilled this year after a Monday Christmas. The cattle plague, it is true, was a legacy from last year; but still the ancient prophet has proved himself a better man than Old Moore and Zadkiel, and a score of modern pretenders.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE AT JERUSALEM.—France and Russia have concluded a convention relative to the restoration of the chapels in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The French and Russian representatives in Jerusalem demand that the houses built on the terraces of the church shall be pulled down.

PRIVATE THEATRICALS.

THERE are some things to the ability to perform which everybody lays claim. Did you ever meet a man who had doubts of himself on the subject of mixing one or other drinkable Christmas liquor? Why, even the teetotallers have invented all kinds of concoctions, which they try to persuade themselves are cheering, palatable, and unstimulative. There is a shop-window in which public attention is called to half a dozen bottles containing what appears to be spoiled raspberry vinegar, under the assumption that it is the "unfermented wines of scripture" and the "right sort of drink for Christmas;" and no doubt somebody prides himself even on that manufacture. Do you dare to call in question the mixed salad of your intimate friend, or to hint at an improvement in the juggled hare of the amiable hostess? Lives there a man with a soul so dead who never to himself has said, "I think I know a good glass of wine when I taste it. I don't profess to be a judge, but I fancy I ought to know what a sherry or a port is like."

Some people favour the suspicion of a taste in jewellery; others are darkly referred to as knowing a thing or two about horses; but nobody ever met with a man or woman who had not an inward conviction that, under certain circumstances, he or she might not make a figure on the stage. Consequently private theatricals flourish, and even in serious families a compromise is effected by means of acting charades. The dramatic element in human nature, which, after all, is only saying the active living human element, finds expression; and as individual expression is mostly indicated by clothes, which are but the external illustrations of men and women's minds, acting of course means dressing. Very often it means nothing else; and, like Mr. Artemus Ward, the performers appear that they may "exhibit their clothes." Even the actors of charades have grown tired of improvising stage costumes with the aid of tablecloths, window-curtains, and coalscuttles; and some graceless member of the family snuggles in a bundle from Mr. Nathan's or Mr. May's. There is one question that must weigh heavily upon the minds of tragedians and melodramatic heroines of the Theatre Royal Drawing-room this season. How are they to let down their back hair, and so, even for a moment, dispel the vast chimera of the overhanging chignon? How is the illusion that has grown into a deception to be confessed by the exhibition of a "scraggy" topknot no longer bolstered with a pad of horsehair? Fancy Cleopatra with a chignon! or the wife of Cæsar with a head-dress of the first Empire! There is only one way out of the difficulty. Wigs must be added to dresses, and Mr. Clarkson must supplement Mr. May. This is merely mentioned to show what unhappy results may be expected from the practice of over-dressing a part, and relying upon the costumer and the perriquer, not only in the private theatricals which include stage plays, but in those other performances which make the chignon and the "jupe crinoline" a part of our daily life.

THE SOUTH WALES COAL-FIELD.—In a paper to be discussed at the next meeting of the South Wales Institute of Engineers the duration of this coal-field is treated of by Mr. Beddington, of the Rhymney Works. He estimates that the upper and lower seams of the district, of 2 ft. and upwards in thickness, contain a total of 21,374,976,000 tons of workable coal; and, after deducting the comparatively small quantity already worked, there is left the enormous total of 21,000,000,000 tons. This calculation is based on the Ordnance surveys and other recognised authorities, which show that the aggregate area of the coal basin is 866 square miles; and Mr. Beddington, in his paper, estimates that each acre will yield 1200 tons, after making due allowance for faults, loss in working, and other drawbacks. The lower seams contain by far the largest quantity; and, in order to work the coal, it will be necessary to go down a depth of 1000 yards, which is believed to be the greatest depth in the centre of the basin. In Lancashire there are now pits 700 yards deep, which are successfully managed; and, from the constant improvement that is taking place in mechanical appliances, there is every probability that long before the coal of the lowest strata is required the difficulties of going down or working 1000 yards deep will be entirely removed. The present yield of Monmouthshire and South Wales is about 11,000,000 tons annually; and at this rate the basin will not be exhausted for 1918 years, and it will supply the total consumption of the United Kingdom for 229 years. The increase of temperature in working the lower measures will be considerable, as heat increases about 1 deg. in every 55 ft.; but, with adequate ventilation, no difficulty is anticipated under this head. As to the probable increase in the consumption, Mr. Beddington believes that the maximum has been nearly reached. Looking at all these facts, which, it may be said, are the embodiment of the opinions of the leading mining engineers of South Wales, there is not much cause for alarm as to the predicted exhaustion of our coal-fields.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TELEGRAPHS.—Shortly before the resignation of the last Ministry a bill was drawn up providing for the purchase and working by Government of the telegraphic lines of the United Kingdom. The project was put forward after a long correspondence with the principal officials of the leading telegraphic companies, not only of England, but also of some of the nations of the Continent. It is understood that Lord Stanley of Alderley takes great interest in the promotion of the scheme and also that the present Ministry have given it their approval. There seems no reason why telegraphs should not be put under the management of Government equally with the Post Office, to which they are so valuable as auxiliary agents—the one having become the complement of the other in the great machinery of the world's correspondence. There is no doubt that, if the scheme be adopted, the public will be able to send messages at a considerably lower rate than they are able to do at present. Besides, the details of the workings of the various lines would be carried out with far greater completeness and expedition. It has been shown over and over again by the most distinguished of our political economists that, when certain institutions assume a certain degree of magnitude, they can be more easily carried on by one great managing power than by several distinct bodies, each of which has to undertake expense little less than that by which all the distinct branches could be maintained under the centralising system. Under this principle the Post Office unquestionably comes, and we see little or no reason why it should not apply also to telegraphs, for their vast network spread over the three kingdoms has now become so extensive and complicated that the intervention of Government seems inevitable. The most noticeable feature of the scheme proposed is the adoption of a uniform rate for a given number of words as respects any distance, the rate being much lower than that at present followed. And here it may be added that, though the English companies have reduced their prices since their first constitution, their rates are still much higher than those which prevail on the Continent and in the United States. Under the plan recommended the Government would have to construct new lines in addition to managing those already existing. The postal arrangements would be made to coincide as much as possible with those of the telegraph offices, and the establishment of a central telegraph bureau corresponding to the General Post Office will make a remarkable addition to the details of the project. The several staffs of the existing companies will, it is presumed, pass into the employment of the Government, while such officials as managing directors and secretaries will have to be provided with fresh appointments or else pensioned off. It appears advisable, considering the advantages to be derived from such a step, that Government should proceed at once to buy up and work the telegraphic lines of the United Kingdom, even at a loss, for not only would the public benefit by the prevalence of the low tariff, but more liberal terms could be entered into with Foreign Powers, and correspondence with the Continent greatly facilitated. It is only just to add that the details of the scheme have been drawn up by Mr. Scudamore, of the General Post Office, whose services in similar matters have been gracefully acknowledged by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons.

DEATH OF J. ROBERTSON, LL.D. OF EDINBURGH.—The death of Joseph Robertson, LL.D., curator of the historical department of her Majesty's Register House, Edinburgh, has robbed Scotland of an eminent scholar, whom she will find it hard to replace. To the general public he was little known, for his special walk lay outside the beaten track; but to antiquarian and historical students his name has long been familiar as that of a man who in his own branch of Scottish antiquities had no living rival. For many years Dr. Robertson was a journalist, attached to the Conservative party; but in the intervals of political strife he found time to show how profound was his antiquarian knowledge, in the publications of the Spalding Club and in the pages of the Quarterly Review. Recognising his pre-eminent merit, the Government of Lord Aberdeen, in 1853, intrusted him with the keeping of the literary and historical records in the Register House; and from that time till his last illness he sent forth volume after volume on his favourite subjects. His latest work, published only the other day, dealt in a masterly fashion with the councils and canons of the Scottish Church; and he earned the lasting gratitude of students by his share in superintending a great national work, the publication of the Scottish historical records. Cut off at the age of fifty-six, in the vigour of his powers, he had not time to give his countrymen the full benefit of his profound learning; but he has done enough to make his name live in the memory of scholars. A gentleman in the highest sense of the word, courteous, generous, kind, he was no less esteemed in the private circle than in the ranks of letters. Leaving no enemies behind him, Joseph Robertson goes to the grave amid the deep sorrow of many friends.





HOW A CHRISTMAS ANGEL CAME TO MR. RASPER.

At this time of year, above all other times, we ought to pity the rich. They always need a great deal of pity, seeing how few rich people really enjoy the blessings of the present world, and how many obstacles there are to what old divines used to call "their abundant entry" into the world to come. We are so often called upon to bestow our compassion upon the poor, and everybody is so terribly mindful of pain, and poverty, and death, as being the worst things that can by any possibility happen to men, that we have very little loving-kindness left for those who need it quite as much as the poor do. We can, at all events, help to mitigate some of those evils which are associated with lack of money; we have something more than mere pity to bestow on those who toil and spin, and yet scarcely win bread; but to those who, having toiled and spun, or having entered into the labours and the fortunes of dead ancestors, are figuratively full of meat, what have we to give but good-will? And yet we forget them in this respect at the very season of all others when we should be most alive to their necessities. Perhaps, if the rich man who had nothing better in his thoughts than how he could best build new barns and storehouses, and so become a miserably monopolist, had met with a little more compassionate regard from his fellows, who only envied him his granaries and never saw how the rats of care were eating out his heart, he might have learned some thing of the Divine wisdom before his soul was required of him. When men begin to acquire riches they are more often than not left very much alone by the only people who can do them any good; their friends relapse into shy or resentful silence—fall off, one by one, and leave the failing roots of love to wither, so that at last, and very quickly too, the soil of their hearts is all hard and allie suff, with scarcely a discernible crack in it for any little green shoot of promise to spring forth to the light.

It was so to some extent with Rasper. When he was second clerk at Bolt, Roper, and Mizzen's, the shipping agents, he was a goodish young fellow enough. He and his friend John Bailey (who was such a sedate, humorous, and gentle soul that he was always jocosely called "Old Bailey") used to go to the Fleece, in Threadneedle-street, and eat their chop together, almost every day, at one o'clock; and when Rasper's salary was raised they made an evening of it, and actually drank a crown bowl of punch at the same hospitable tavern. Ah, that was punch! The Fleece is pulled down now, and has been these many years, and it is believed that the recipe for that punch perished, along with the art of broiling thirty-nine steaks, chops, and cutlets on one huge gridiron without making a mistake as to the identity of one of them. Great merchants and bankers, whose names were good upon "Change to any amount you liked to mention, dined there too; and it was the Bank of England to a China orange that their chops and fillets were the cheapest and smallest consigned to Betsy the cook. They never ordered punch—catch them at it! but Rasper and John did, now and then, and when they were both single young men; and at that time neither of them envied the capitalists.

After John Bailey married the pretty girl on whom his choice had long been fixed, Rasper would often visit them of an evening; and he was to have been godfather to their second boy, but something prevented. Rasper was "getting on." He had succeeded to the post of first clerk, and now he had come into a £5000 legacy from some old relation, and there was some talk of his becoming junior partner. He was growing rich (comparatively speaking), and John Bailey and his wife fancied his old friendship was waning—perhaps it was. They thought that he looked down a little upon their plain front parlour, and that he despised their humble negus and whisky-and-water, and joint and pudding and evening rubber; and they themselves without knowing it, began to grow "stand-off-ish." So they met very seldom, and poor Rasper was left to get on; and, as he had never made many friends, he got on—and such a long way on, that he had nothing left him to think about but how he might get on further still, and so right away from all the influences that would have kept him in the real living world, instead of launching him into the world of carving and gilding—that is to say, of "carving out his fortune," and "gilding his (bitter social) pill." Rasper went from junior to second, from second to first; and, as he was let alone, and nobody pitied him, he became quite a grizzled, careworn, but pompous man, and the firm changed its denomination from Bolt, Roper, and Mizzen's, to Rasper, Roper, and Co., the latter being the son of the former second partner and only surviving family representative of the original house, except Mrs. Rasper, who, having been a Miss Mizzen, was an excellent match, and not very likely to take her husband on the road back again, when he had been getting on with her (and her fortune), to one of his carved and gilt goals.

They had issue two daughters. To most people who were not rich they would have been children; but to poor Rasper they were "issue." He had no time to think of babies when they were born, and they were consigned principally to a wet-nurse apiece, by order of a West-End practitioner, who feared that the lady of Joshua Rasper, Esq., could scarcely be expected to provide them with nourishment, since they had the impertinence not to have been born sons, after he had confidently foretold on each occasion that the firm would be accommodated with an heir.

Old Bailey, on the contrary, had two young Baileys—one a fine smart fellow with rather a dashing manner, and the other, the youngest, so much like his father that his school-fellows began to call him "Old Bailey" before he went out of pinafores. John, the father, had not acquired the art of getting on; he stayed pretty nearly where he was; but a good many people stayed with him. Sometimes he pitied his old friend Rasper; but his pity took no active shape, though really Rasper shook hands with him still whenever they happened to meet, which was very seldom. John's eldest son was to be a doctor, and, being a fine, venturesome fellow, when he became a doctor—that is to say, when he had passed hall and college and had given a little time to hospital practice—he thought he should like to give his learning a little sea air, and looked out for a ship wanting "an experienced surgeon." It was soon found in an advertisement, and by some accident—which is as much as saying by some divine incident—the ship was one in which Rasper, Roper, and Co. were concerned. So it came about that the young doctor waited on his father's old friend, was invited to his father's old friend's house, and, by some extraordinary faculty which some men possess of doing irrational things, fell in love with Alice Rasper, aged nineteen, he himself being three and twenty. This is no "love story;" because the love of these two young people was somehow mutual, and neither of them loved, or, as far as they knew, was beloved by anybody else. Charles Bailey went to sea; came back; went in feverish unrest to the villa residence where Alice shared the light duties of the household with her sister; waited for Mr. Rasper's return from business, and went into heroics; the result of which was that he was shown to the door, desired not to trouble himself to call again, and the next day received his arrears of salary, with a £20 note or so over, and a cold intimation that his engagement was at an end. Mrs. Rasper died six months afterwards; and it was feared by some of the very few people who troubled themselves about the matter—these being mostly servants, shopkeepers, and the slender circle of genteel acquaintances in the villas right and left—that Alice would follow her mother. She didn't, though; she followed her lover instead—as his wife. They were married privately, and went a voyage together in a vessel belonging to another firm than that of Rasper, Roper, and Co. Her name was supposed to be scored out of her father's will; her sister Beatrice, who was already engaged to Roper, only eleven years older than herself, and little more than an ornamental partner in the firm, took her place in that dreary household. Joshua Rasper had got on so far by that time that people who had once tried to keep up with him were quite out of breath, or prudently halted before they felt that, in trying to make the best of both worlds, they fell into an abyss between the two. Joshua Rasper himself hadn't done that. He had pretty well kept to this world; but he was altogether on the wrong side of it, poor fellow! He was as hard, and silent, and wretched as anybody could be; unless the somebody else had first striven to be rich, and then

had abolished his daughter from his faith, and estranged her from his love, and cut her out of his will, and forbidden her name to be mentioned in his hearing, and turned her picture to the wall, and put a servant to sleep in her bed-room, and sold her wardrobe to the old clothesman, and committed a number of absurdities to try to be less than human, only to find out that Heaven would have him human after all, because his face wrinkled and his hair turned grey; and he got a stoop, and shambled in his gait, and grew old, and hugged himself all the time in the vain endeavour to persuade himself that it wasn't he, but somebody else, who was in fault.

Beatrice saw her sister sometimes; but what in the world could she do? She was as likely to come out of that will as not, unless she married Roper, which, by-the-by, she was quite willing to do; and, beyond the £50 that she had saved out of her pocket-money and left in the hand of her little niece, she could help her sister (who was sharply pinched, but happier withal than poor Beatrice) only with such loving words as she could command, and they were few and broken.

She never saw that little niece again. It died, and was laid in its little baby-coffin in the cemetery of a seaport town far from London. She ceased to hear of Alice, except once or twice in some vague rumour that her husband was at sea or had come home, and that she had bought a "practice" which turned out to be a swindle, and he had gone out again as ship's surgeon on the death of his father and mother. This was the last that she heard; but whether Alice had gone with him or not she could not learn. Like Mr. Rasper, the Years had got on, but to more beneficent ends than he had, poor old wretch! Beatrice was still waiting to be united to Mr. Roper, for her father had refused his consent until she was five-and-twenty; and as to Roper, he could say nothing, for all his money was locked up in the firm, somehow, and he was a mild, gentlemanly fellow, who had no notion whatever of getting on until somebody pushed him.

One of the years already alluded to was drawing to a close, and people who knew the value of its few remaining days, and how much loving kindness might, could, and should be shown by their true regard of the holy festival which then wanted but a few hours of its advent, prepared to make merry. The poulterers helped them, so did the butchers, the fruiterers, and the confectioners; but it was to the grocers that they owed most, for the shops were all ablaze, and, amidst the jingle of the copper scales upon the counters and the jubilant music of the children's voices, were such sights, and scents, and sounds as only grocery can adequately furnish when combined with coffee-mills and machines for chopping loaf-sugar.

There were no such sights, scents, nor sounds in Joshua Rasper's office, as he came out of it on that 24th of December, just as the fog had turned into night, and the few solitary glims of candles in dingy counting-houses were being put out by junior clerks with paper extinguishers. He was quite alone, was Rasper, for all his people had gone home, and he had chosen to stay and spend a cheerful half hour over some of his private accounts. He had been interrupted by a sound of altercation outside his ground-glass window; but it was too yellow and dirty for him to see anything through it, even if he had taken the trouble to leave his chair to look. He heard the voice of a policeman, and then he fancied there was a sobbing and a scuffling of feet; but, whatever it was, it had gone away, and he had no business with it. His daughter Beatrice was to meet him with the brougham at six o'clock, at the corner by the Bank, and it only wanted seven minutes, so he pulled on his great coat, knocked the dust out of his beaver gloves, pressed his hat firmly on his grizzled old head, and, first making sure that he had locked the iron safe, took the door-key and put out his lamp.

"Mrs. Chuppins!" shouted old Rasper as he stood at the bottom of the stairs, "just take this key, will you?" But Mrs. Chuppins—wh— "kept the offices and did for them"—returned no answer.

Old Rasper rang the bell, with a similar result; for the fact was that Mrs. Chuppins, believing that everybody either had or should have gone home long before, had sallied forth to do battle for Christmas in her small way—that is to say, to the extent of about half a crown's worth of grocery and three shillings' worth of beef—and so the great house was empty. Old Rasper grumbled, hung the key on a nail in the passage, banged the street door after him, stood on the top step for a moment to pull on his gloves and look at the weather—which wasn't much to look at either—and was about to plunge into the street, when his foot touched a soft bundle in a corner of the deep, dusty old doorway, and the soft bundle began to cry. Old Rasper picked it up, upside down at first, which made it cry more; but correcting himself afterwards by a sort of instinct, and looking more closely at it as he stooped, he found that it was a baby.

Now, mind you, a very strange thing happened just at that moment—a miracle, if ever there was a miracle. Here had been a poor, rich old man, groping and stumbling, and walking and running, and carving and gilding himself out of the breath of life for nobody knows how many years, and suddenly he seemed to have a whiff of pure air, only a whiff, but still of pure air from Heaven. Here was a poor, rich, wretched, old ophthalmic fellow, who had kept out the light of the sun with gold spectacles for pretty well half his days, and suddenly he received sight. He only saw men yet as trees walking; but still the Divine touch was on his eyeballs, and the film shrank a little, and a ray darted in.

Old Rasper felt sharp pangs of pity, surprise, wonder, shame, courage dart through his leathery old heart and make it leap again, and send his sluggish blood at a pace that must have made his pulse beat ten more to the minute.

"Good God!"—he was no Atheist, you see. "Good God! This is very awful." How could anybody do such a thing as this? I wonder how they came to leave it here, and whether anybody is coming back for it. I—I—must really wait and see. Poor little creature! it can't be left to perish on such a night. Somebody will tread upon it."

He waited, nobody came; not even a policeman, not an errand boy. The court where he stood was as deserted as the churchyard—more so, for there was no body in it even except his own and that little one that he held in his arms. Yes, he did, indeed. He didn't like to put it down again, though it was a very lively body for an elderly gentleman to carry.

"I can't take charge of it; and yet, what the deuce"—you see he still retained a sense of evil—"what the deuce am I to do? I daren't take it down to the Bank and see if there's any way of finding who it belongs to. And yet, why not? I can't stand here all night; and it's confoundedly dark, and nobody can tell what I've got here—that is, if it doesn't cry; and even if they did, I've no reason to care, so long as— Well, there's nothing else for it, that I can see. James is sure to have the carriage-lamps alight; and so here goes." And he went. Beatrice was already looking out for him when he arrived at the door of the brougham. She saw the bundle in his arms; noticed his hurried manner; saw the grim smile on his grizzly face, remarked that his hat had worked to the very back of his head, but that he had no hand wherewith to rectify it; and she had a dark suspicion either that her father had gone mad or had dined.

Even in that rapid flash of reason that comes with fancy she decided on the former, for Old Rasper never dined. He took victuals just as one of his own steamers might take in coal; but dine, no; he had "got on" much too far for that.

"Papa, what is the matter, and what are you going to take home with you—a turkey?"

Another miracle happened. Old Rasper's grim smile broadened, beamed, glowed, and over all his face there shone a laugh—yes, and it sounded, too—not a miserable titter, but a laugh—a Christmas sort of laugh. It woke the baby.

"Here, just take it a minute, Beatrice, while I get the carriage lamp; and don't sit staring there, for Heaven's sake. I picked it up off the office step, and there was nobody to give it to; we may as well see what it's like before I hand it over to the police. Let's see; we shan't pass a workhouse, I think, shall we?"

It was all very well to ask questions, but who was to answer them? Beatrice was so busy untying the bundle that she hadn't a word to say, and when the great, coarse shawl was unpinned, and a plump,

fair-haired, blue-eyed little fellow, dressed very cleanly in white muslin and flannel, lay before her on the carriage-seat, she acted just as Pharaoh's daughter did at the finding of Moses, and longed to have him for her own.

"Thank God! that there is this blessed yearning in women towards helplessness and weakness, or what would become of us? We are not told what Pharaoh did; but what old Rasper did was this. He put back the lamp, told James to drive home; and as poor Beatrice held the little stranger to her swansdown breast and cried over him, her father leant forward and whispered, "We must advertise him at the police stations, my girl; but if he isn't claimed, why, hang me, if you mayn't keep him."

Now, the next day would be Christmas Day; and, though old Rasper had very few acquaintances and fewer friends, some of the few were coming to dinner. He added to their number; for it is in the nature of miracles to work other and greater of their kind; and this thing that had happened to the poor rich old man was carrying him back and back, so that if he had waited to get on until then he would have been hopelessly impecunious before he died. He had an hour alone in a dreary room that he called his library; then he lighted the gas, and wrote two or three notes to his clerks and to people who would not be mightily offended at a short notice, and dispatched them by James. There is no need to describe the dinner the next day, nor the raptures over the baby, nor the whispered suspicions and covert glances of some of the party who couldn't believe in old Rasper's story because they had never yet believed in the spirit of Christmas. Mind, he hadn't grown good all of a sudden, old Rasper hadn't. There was a bit of a reaction in the morning, and he was much the same cold, cautious, hardish old fellow as ever quite through dinner, and even afterwards. The baby was brought in because his vocal powers made it necessary to account for his presence; but old Rasper looked a little shy.

After this he became (for him) recklessly jolly, and everybody was at it, laughing and talking, and going on like Christmas, when there came a peremptory peal at the house bell; and presently James, the sedate and silent, sidled in with "Please, Sir, couldn't you step down 'arf a minnit?" And perhaps, Sir, if Miss Beatrice—

"What is it?" said Beatrice, and was down stairs before old Rasper had got further than the landing.

What was it, indeed? It was a woman half lying against one of the hall chairs, supported by a young man, who, seeing Mr. Rasper, addressed himself to him at once.

"There is a policeman outside, Sir, who can confirm what I say. I am a schoolmaster, and was coming from a Christmas treat when I saw him standing with the light of his lantern turned upon this poor lady. She was crouched in a doorway just below here, and I could see that she was perishing from want and sickness. There were lights here, and I trusted to the claims of humanity and of this season to excuse my asking your help for her; to remove her to the police-station would cause her death, I'm certain."

"And who may you be, young man?" said old Rasper, a little testily.

"My name is John Bailey," said the young man, stepping forward into the light.

Years seemed to roll away, and Joshua Rasper thought for a moment that he saw before him the friend of his youth; but it was "Old Bailey's" second son. When the poor rescued woman heard him speak, she roused a little, and, looking wildly round, began to wander in her speech, asking for her baby, her child, her darling boy, whom she had lost—lost she knew not where, except that she had wandered to seek help of one who never surely could refuse it to the child.

Old Rasper gave a great, an awful cry, and fell upon his knees. Beatrice had her arms round the woman in a moment, and Roper, with that wise instinct which often belongs to God's idiots, ran down for the baby, and brought it up and placed it in the mother's arms.

"Alice! Alice! Sister, speak to me!" sobbed Beatrice.

"My child! my child!" moaned old Rasper, still on his knees, and chafing her frozen hands.

She was carried gently up stairs, and warmed and fed, and her bed was got ready, and, as a surgeon had been sent for, the great knock at the door was answered like clockwork; but if that was the surgeon he went up stairs three steps at a time, and flew to clasp the patient in his arms.

"Those lying newspapers," he said, "what mischief they do! Though, really, we were almost given up at Lloyds'. And to think that you should have been in want, and wandered up to London in search of help!"

He looked sternly round, but his eyes met two tearful faces, an old grizzled face, its harsh lines all broken by a look of mingled grief and joy; a younger one bending over a little rosy child.

"The—the child at least belongs to me," sobbed old Rasper; "it came to me like an angel out of heaven, and I cannot part with it."

"Nor can we," returned Charles Bailey, taking his father-in-law's hands; "I don't know how it's here, nor why, but we can't part with it."

"Then, why—why the deuce don't you all stop where you are?" said Roper. "I never knew such a set of—of—duffers in my life; upon my soul, I never did."

Beatrice went up and kissed him on the spot; then he kissed the baby; then Charles kissed his wife. Old Rasper kissed and shook hands with everybody all round. Everything had come right at last; and he had "got on" to better purpose than ever. T. A.

CHRISTMAS ON BOARD A MERCHANT-SHIP.

THERE is little danger of any intelligent readers interpreting our picture to mean a present change in the administration of the laws which govern the provisioning of ships engaged in the merchant service. The good time has not arrived when sharp, swift, and sure penalties follow the breach of such an Act of Parliament. If sailors were horses or oxen, half a dozen philanthropists would at once form a society for their protection, and those who wilfully starved and misused them would be held up to public execration and would run the risk of fine and imprisonment; being only men, and mostly honest men, they are liable to be famished on a small supply of half-putrid junk, sawdusty biscuit, adulterated coffee, and obfuscated rum; they may rot with scurvy for the want even of the rations of impure lime juice supposed to be provided in obedience to the law; they may eat rotten "preserved" vegetables out of damaged tin cases until they are liable to incurable dysentery; and, at the very best, beef which has been rejected by Government inspectors as not prime enough for the convicts at Portland Prison, is shipped for them as a vast improvement on the filthy and impenetrable "junk" which is euphuised on board ship by the name of "old horse." Be it understood that our picture is no illustration of Christmas at sea in any ordinary sense. The negro cook, travestying Mr. Henry Russell's song, declares:—

A life by de galley fire,
A home in de old caboose,
Is de life I most admire,

makes haste to explain that the crown of his felicity is his comfortable reflections as he

Cooks de Captain's goose.

The introduction of a few raisins into the usual pasty mass known by the name of "duff" is a sufficient recognition of Christmas Day as well as of Sunday and other high days and holidays; and a really liberal commander, who regrets, but cannot help, the niggardly and illegal practices of his "owners," may sometimes send a tin or two from his private stores "forrads," or may even devote an ancient bird from the hen-coop that the men may have a taste apiece, and delude themselves with the notion that they have had poultry for dinner; but it is only on rare occasions that Jack is as good as his Master. Our Artist was lucky enough to come upon a special Christmas subject, and, making use of his opportunity, as artists will do, left to us the explanation of the whole matter.

The Sarah Ann warped out of dock the second week in December, and lay at Gravesend, where the boys, who had not got over the recollection of plum-pudding and snapdragon, actually thought they might, after all, get a holiday ashore. The men knew

better; the wary cook—a silent man, with an eye to the main chance and a knowledge of human nature acquired by a few years cruising among the West India Islands and other parts of the sea's surface—knew better also, but he had made his arrangements. On Christmas Eve the Sarah Ann was away, and the land was saying good-by under a mist. On Christmas morning all hands smelt salt water, and had nearly forgotten spice, sugar, and nutmeg, when, lo! two or three at a time were silly enough to the space within the warm glow of the cuddy fire, and there, adorning the top of an unbroke water-cask, was displayed a streaky, ruddy, marbly handsome piece of beef—none of your "chucks" or sticking pieces, mind you, but a fair, handsome joint, the best part of the ribs, with the opportunity for mighty slices, all juice and flavour. Behold, also, a goose—two geese—broad-breasted, fat, fluffy, oily, luscious-looking fellows, in which one might fancy a whiff of sage and onions and a sharply-faint odour of apple-sauce already. One of these, ready-trussed, Master Cook—who must have been the eldest son of that proverbial sea-cook so often spoken of in maritime epithet—held tenderly, caressingly, and in such a position as to show off all its most seductive points. Behold, again, lest rapt admiration should flag by too complete contemplation of only one object, two spherical bags, tied at the mouths as deftly as was the sack of Benjamin by the messenger who left Joseph's silver cup therein. Over these, with jovial admiration, the youngest A.B. on board lingered as he sat, as it were, on guard upon the fowl-coop. Only once did the cook's placid smile relax and a frown gather on his broad, jolly face, and that was when somebody said, "What! plum-duffs?"

"Where did you go to learn manners, William?" he inquired, then, with an injured look. "Them there aint no more duffs than you're fust mate; them's puddens, that's what they are, an' mixed spice an' cittern in both on 'em. One's the captain's, mind you; and one goose is captain's; and I thinks to myself when I go ashore to perwidge Christmas aft, why not, I says to myself, make a little watur, John, an' have a extra goose, an' a prime piece o' beef, an' a real hearty no make-belief-pudden for forrards, for them as likes to jine to pay for it, becoss I says it's Christmas time, say what you will, and it won't come to much apiece, as I'd got a pound or two by me, and I know'd as I might trust to men as was men to pay me when they takes their fust advance; for, don't you see, I thought as you would like to set down to as good a dinner as captain a Christmas Day."

They rather thought they would, and they *did*, and that was how our Artist came to make this sketch of Christmas on board a merchant-ship.

A HOUSE IN MOROCCO.

We have frequently published engravings and descriptions illustrating the wonderful scenery, the strange people, and the remarkable towns and cities of Algeria. That territory is now becoming a travelling-ground for tourists, and the excursion of the Emperor of the French has served to open up the hitherto conservative districts, and to introduce European habits and modes of living amongst a people who are slowly adopting such changes as are not too greatly opposed to their original customs. Our engraving this week represents an interior which may before long be very rare even in Tetuan, that marvellous old coast town beyond Tangiers, where the wonderful scented pot-oranges come from, and the picturesque Oriental life is freshened a little by the sea breeze which mingles with the perfume of spices and the odour of citron groves. The glimpse of the Harem of Ashah, the Governor of Tetuan, was only gained during the war before France had finally taken possession of all her territory in Algeria, and it was just a characteristic picture of that lazy Moorish life which will, perhaps, give way—has, indeed, already given way—before the brisk enterprise of Franco-Arab combinations. There can be no room for the idle and stupid existence, the sum of which was the women's apartments, soporific pipes, curly-toed slippers, sleep, and sweetmeats, now that the country responds to agricultural exhibitions and an increasing trade and busy manufactures. Soon the only recollections of this condition will be found in the books of travellers and in such pages as our own. It is probable that there may be some admixture of the old Berber blood in the Moorish veins; but it has been chiefly supplied by the Saracen invasion, and is now far from being the purest in the world. Roughly handled and cowed by the Turks, this class has lost that confidence in itself which flows from the spirit of clanship amongst the Bedouins. The Moors have adopted most of the old Turkish fashions. Their costume consists of very full drawers, leaving their legs bare, an ample jacket, a couple of embroidered waistcoats, a turban, and a pair of morocco-leather papooses on their otherwise bare feet. Many of them have adopted the Arab bournous. The dresses of the women are more various, picturesque, and complicated. The young girls wear a little close-fitting velvet cap, called a *qumibat*, just covering the top of the head and tied under the chin; it is ornamented with sequins, which often give a notion of the fair one's probable dowry. It may be that recent Parisian fashions have been imported from Tetuan, and that the modern bonnet is but a modification of the *qumibat*. The hair is worn either in long plaits or in queues bound with red ribbon, though occasionally it floats freely in curls. Matrons wear a kind of tiara of gold or silver. A tight corage or bodice of silk, a large and richly wrought sash or zone, and loose trousers, complete the ordinary costume; but the full-dress comprises a second cap, which covers part of the forehead, and is knotted in front, at the top of the head, or a bandeau of jewels tied to the edge of a handkerchief, which is worn like a cap. On great occasions an open tunic is worn, and the sash is of broad-striped silk, falling to the ground in front. The wealthy women are loaded with jewels, legings, armlets, earrings, collars of sequins, and rings enough to prevent their walking or using their limbs for any useful purpose. Of course, they are fully veiled when they go abroad—are, in fact, enveloped in the big folds of the *foutah*, an enormous sheet of white cotton, which transforms its wearer into a mere bale or bundle with a pair of stoutish legs visible beneath its folds. Marriages are contracted by deputy, the young couple seldom meeting and never seeing each other until the wedding day. "Young couple" is very literally true, for the girls are often married at ten or eleven years old, and are mothers at twelve; consequently they treat their babies like dolls, and dislike their children when they are too old to be nursed. The Moorish women are, in fact, as much slaves as the negro girls who are their attendants in the harem, and, though the men are mild-tempered, lazy, and fond of gambling, smoking, and sleeping away their days, or of sitting sipping coffee, and occasionally working at the lightest possible occupation, which in other countries is performed by women, the women themselves are in the lower classes laborious slaves, worn out with work and want, and in the harems, luxurious slaves, tired of the coarse monotonous luxury of an indolent seclusion.

THE IRON CROWN OF LOMBARDY.—The iron crown, handed over by Austria to Victor Emmanuel, was solemnly replaced on the 6th inst. in the Cathedral of Monza. The diadem of the ancient Lombard Kings, brought from Florence to the Palace of Monza, was carried to the entrance of the sacred edifice in a gala carriage, escorted by a guard of honour, and followed by a second containing the Grand Master of the Ceremonies and General Solaroli, delegated by King Victor Emmanuel to represent him at the ceremony. On the open space in front of the church was erected a richly decorated stand for the civil and military authorities. There, after a *proclamation* recording the restitution had been drawn up in form, General Solaroli handed over the precious object to the archbishop, and it is henceforth to be designated as the crown of Italy.

THE REV. LORD S. GODOLPHIN OSBORNE.—An address, signed by seventy-five occupiers of land in Wiltshire, whose average occupations exceed 1000 acres, has been presented to "S. G. O." (the Rev. Lord S. G. Osborne), thanking him warmly for his late letters against the Ritualistic practices. "We also desire to declare," they add, "our alarm at the tone of the letter which has, in consequence of this protest, been addressed to your Lordship by the Bishop of Salisbury; and we would express our full belief that, if the doctrines inculcated in that letter were to be generally adopted by the clergy throughout our diocese, the consequences to the cause of real scriptural religion must be serious indeed."

Literature.

William Hogarth: Painter, Engraver, and Philosopher. Essays on the Man, the Work, and the Time. By GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA. With Illustrations. London: Smith, Elder, and Co.

Mr. Sala's Essays on Hogarth attracted very much favourable attention on their publication in the earliest numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine*; and their reappearance in a collected shape—in a form, as it were, of responsibility—was looked for with interest. With interest, because the Essays were, after all, little more than clever sketches, for the most part on the "Time," less on the "Work," and less still on the "Man." The early portions were spread out with a goldbeater's skill—which, we will say, was suited to the material—and the later portions were not, indeed, solid gold, or anything of the kind, but rather a confident assurance from a good authority that there was plenty of gold—somewhere! Mr. Sala, in his last sentence but one, shows that he is conscious of defects. "I am conscious of the commission of many errors and inaccuracies in the performance of my task; but I humbly hope that the opportunity will be afforded to me, at no distant date, of correcting my blunders elsewhere." This is a gentleman-like admission, but we cannot help noticing that the Essays are disfigured by "blunders and inaccuracies," which should not occur provided the author sees his proofs—sheets or the printer or publisher employs a reputable reader. But to have such "blunders and inaccuracies" repeated in a permanent edition is unpardonable. The "Marriage à la Mode" is not, and never was, in the Vernon Collection. No Bishop Hill, but Bishop John Still, of Bath and Wells, wrote "Back and Side go Bare, go Bare." Figg, the prize-fighter, did not spell his name as we spell that of the fruit; here, however, it is spelt both ways; and the celebrated coffee-house was Will's, not Will's. And to conclude a list of errors discovered in merely turning the book over, (we had read the papers in the *Magazine*), the following occurs at page 276: "When a married pair are childless, and become prosperous, and the man renowned, and keep their coach and their country-house, the fairy-tale peroration is, perhaps, the most appropriate: 'And they lived long and happily, beloved by everybody.' But the child's couch may be thorny, &c. What printer 'read for sense' here? The author's mistake is plain enough. It is so well known that Mr. Sala has been abroad—in Spain, Italy, everywhere—between one and two years, that readers will be warranted in thinking that proof sheets have been lost in the treacherous hands of the careless postman, in the Mountains of the Moon or the Land of Prester John. And, moreover, when they find that the early chapters are as elaborate, discursive, and excellent as they originally were, and that the latter chapters remain still as miserably bare, hurried, and 'scamped' as they were, readers will be warranted in thinking that Mr. Sala has had nothing whatever to do with the present edition of his Hogarth papers. It is possible only to surmise at literary or business accidents which happened seven years ago; but it would be doing Mr. Sala great injustice to make him responsible for faults which cannot be his, and greater injustice to deny him the warmest thanks for the brilliancy of his best pages, while lamenting that others are less brilliant only through unknown and unpleasant circumstances.

Legends of Savage Life. By JAMES GREENWOOD. With Thirty-six Illustrations, drawn on wood, by Ernest Griset, from his original designs. London: John Camden Hotten.

A book the joint production of James Greenwood and Ernest Griset must needs have merits, if of a somewhat peculiar kind. And in "Legends of Savage Life" there are great merits—of a very peculiar kind indeed. Of Mr. Greenwood's part in the volume it will be enough to say that it is worthy of his reputation, and is full of those quaint touches of humour, that fertility of imagination, and specimens of those marvellous descriptive powers for which he is famous. M. Griset's share of the work is more difficult to characterise. There is so much that is weird, and wild, and grotesque, and exaggerated in his drawings that one is at a loss to decide whether most to admire the wonderful dashes of genius occasionally exhibited, or to marvel how on earth such images ever got into a man's brain, much less were depicted by his pencil. Both the pictures and the stories written to them must be taken with a large grain of salt, for—well, realism is not their distinguishing feature. Whatever may be averred of M. Griset's sketches, it cannot be said of them that they are violations of the second mandate in the decalogue: they may be caricatures, but they certainly are not likenesses of anything we have ever seen in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.

Memorable Wars of Scotland. By PATRICK FRASER TYTLER, F.R.S.E., F.A.S., Author of "The History of Scotland." Edinburgh: W. P. Nimmo.

In the "Memorable Wars of Scotland" Mr. Nimmo has, we think, hit upon a very happy idea, which will admit of being worked with advantage to a pretty considerable extent. This notion is to extract from the writings of an eminent historian such portions of his works as are of special interest, which describe distinct incidents, and which are in themselves complete narratives. Our youth, by this means, may be indoctrinated, as it were, by degrees with a love for that most important of all merely profane subjects of study—history. And this may be done in a much more satisfactory way by perfect extracts from the works of good writers than by having the several incidents worked up in a merely perfunctory manner by some third-rate literary hack, who works only in order to make a book. Mr. Nimmo's experiment, which we hope will meet with sufficient success to encourage him to repeat it, has, appropriately enough in a Scotch publisher, been made upon the history of his own country and from the works of that country's best historian—Mr. Patrick Fraser Tytler. The volume opens with the account of the Battle of Largs, fought in 1263, between the Scots, under Alexander, "third monarch of that warlike name," and closes with the combat of Glenlivet, fought in 1594, between the Catholic Lords, headed by Huntly and Errol, and the army of King James VI., commanded by the youthful Earl of Argyll. The volume also contains accounts of the battles of Stirling, Falkirk, and Bannockburn, during the War of Independence under Wallace and Bruce; together with the fights at Harlaw, Flodden, Pinkie, Homildon-hill, and Langside, as well as of the famous siege of Edinburgh Castle, when that stronghold was so tenaciously defended by Kirkcaldy of Grange. To state that these are the events narrated in this volume, and that the narrator is Tytler, is to give a sufficient recommendation of the work. A curious illustration of the light science throws on history occurs in connection with the battle of Largs, which is worthy of being noted. It is remarked by the Norwegian chronicler, that when King Haco lay with his fleet at Ronaldsvoe "a great darkness drew over the sun, so that only a little ring was bright round his orb." The ancient historian, while omitting to specify either the year or the month in which the events he was narrating occurred, thus unconsciously afforded to modern science the means of exactly ascertaining the date of this great expedition. The eclipse was calculated, and it was found to have taken place on Aug. 5, 1263, and to have been annular at Ronaldsvoe, in Orkney.

The Works of the late W. M. Thackeray. 1. *Philip's Adventures on his Way through the World.* 2. *The Paris Sketch-book.* London: Smith, Elder, and Co.

We have received these two volumes of a handsome new edition, in crown 8vo, of Mr. Thackeray's works, which we hope Messrs. Smith and Elder intend to complete. The issue of this edition we take to be evidence of the fact that Thackeray has a growing audience, recruited both downward and laterally—that, in other words, the circle is an increasing one of readers who can appreciate and enjoy the works of the greatest satirist of our time. Thackeray, perhaps, never will have—as he certainly has not now—so large and miscellaneous an audience as his great contemporary and friend, Dickens (we repudiate all notion of rivalry between them); but, in proportion as education, taste, refinement, and the capacity to appreciate high

literary art, keen and polished satire, and yet genial kindness, are diffused, so will the range of Thackeray's influence expand and the circle of his admirers increase. We thank Messrs. Smith and Elder for this most elegant and convenient edition, which will both aid and gratify the development of mind to which we have referred.

ROUTLEDGE AND SONS' ELEGANT GIFT-BOOKS.

Ballad Stories of the Affections. From the Scandinavian. By ROBERT BUCHANAN. With Illustrations by G. J. Pinwell, E. Dalziel, W. Small, T. Dalziel, J. D. Watson, A. B. Houghton, and J. Lawson.

This handsome volume has reached us far too late for the examination which should precede criticism; but Mr. Buchanan's name will go much farther than any opinion we could give. The illustrations have been done with great care. Some are most admirable, and all of them are good. But, alas! here is Mr. Pinwell again, with his "human face" hideous. We could not at first remember where we had seen the faces recalled to our memory by the drawing at page 109; but at last we recollected—it was at an infirmary; there were some scrofulous women waiting their turn. The artist has hit them off to a horror. We do assure Mr. Pinwell that his "Maid Mettelil," at page 47, makes us shiver. Look at her elbows and her jaw! We seem to feel the edge of her collarbone as we look at this miserable starveling of a woman. Does the artist say we have no business to think of such things? We beg his pardon. He has no business to make us think of such things. The fact is, it is very easy to make either a pretty face and form or an ugly face and form; and very hard to make them of a truly natural type. Yet this medium course is the only tolerable one; the majority even of quite ordinary faces are so much handsomer than Mr. Pinwell's that we cannot imagine where he gets his from. Nor, if they were exact copies of ordinary faces, would it mend his case: for as the artist cannot possibly give us that beauty of life which belongs even to a plain face, he is bound to give us the outlines at their best. These figures will haunt our dreams, like cripples or leprous beggars. It is a vast pity these things should be so, for Mr. Pinwell has great power, and devotes much study to truth of accessory, and indeed, truth in general. Add to which, he is one of the few artists for the wood-block who seem to know what the special function of wood-engraving is, and sticks faithfully to that function. We hope he will soon get over this mania of ugliness, and do justice to his own fine faculties. In the meanwhile we do beg him to believe that, while we like realism both in picture and song, we at present turn to—and, alas! from—many of his drawings with a thrill of repulsion. Unluckily, the very merits of his work as wood-engravings, including his great decision of outline, make his mannerism of ugliness all the more glaring.

Leaves from a Christmas Bough. By E. BOND. Ornamented by A. L. Bond.

This pretty little gem of a book is an imitation of the illuminated missals, breviaries, and so on, of the Middle Ages; and exceedingly well indeed have all connected with getting up the volume done their part. Who E. Bond and A. L. Bond may be, and whatever may have been the exact share of each in preparing the book for publication—whether, that is, the ornamentation ascribed to A. L. B. includes the drawing of the pictures as well as their surroundings—are not matters which we are particularly interested in ascertaining. Enough for us the fact that we have before us a series of "neat" verses very beautifully illustrated and ornamented, and that we can award a hearty and sincere word of congratulation to both E. and A. L. B. on their success. Nor must we forget to give the credit that is due—and it is great—to the engravers and printers—Leighton Brothers—who have so tastefully, skillfully, and admirably worked out the designs placed in their hands. A prettier specimen of the colour-printer's art we have not seen for some years, and circumstances have made us tolerably familiar with this branch of art.

The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Illustrated by John Gilbert. Complete Edition.

Elegant as have been some of the editions of Longfellow's poems that have appeared in England, that just issued by Messrs. Routledge will well bear a comparison with the best. It is not so elaborately got up, so profusely illustrated, nor, perhaps, so carefully printed, as that published some years ago by the late Mr. Bogue; but then this edition is in one volume, and does not cost a tithe of the price of that to which we have alluded; and yet is a very handsome volume indeed. It is elegantly bound in green and gold; it is illustrated by John Gilbert; it is well printed on beautiful paper, with a neat carmine line round the page; the type is clear and distinct, though small; and it contains the whole of the poet's works, including his last volume, "Tales of a Wayside Inn," &c. On the whole, this edition of Longfellow's poems is a very beautiful, as well as a very useful and valuable, gift-book.

Three Hundred Æsop's Fables. Literally translated from the Greek by the Rev. GEO. FYLER TOWNSEND, M.A. Illustrated by Harrison Weir.

Æsop's Fables! Can they ever cease to interest and please the young? ay, and the elders, too? We ourselves—albeit we have long since ceased to be "young and curly"—can still take pleasure in reading and moralising over these wonderful allegories. But Æsop's Fables illustrated by Harrison Weir! Ha ha! young friends! That's pleasant news for you, indeed. Get the book by all means—we had almost said by any means—and we will be bound for it that there will be no greater treasure among your stores, rich though they may be. That the fables have been faithfully and scholarly, yet simply and elegantly, rendered by the Rev. Mr. Townsend; that the illustrations have been carefully engraved by Mr. J. Greenaway; and that the book has been beautifully printed by Clay, Son, and Taylor, are no mean recommendations; but the great point is, that we have here Æsop pictorially rendered by Harrison Weir. Could any combination be more fortunate? We ought to add that Mr. Townsend's preface—or, rather, essay on fable—is another valuable feature of this edition.

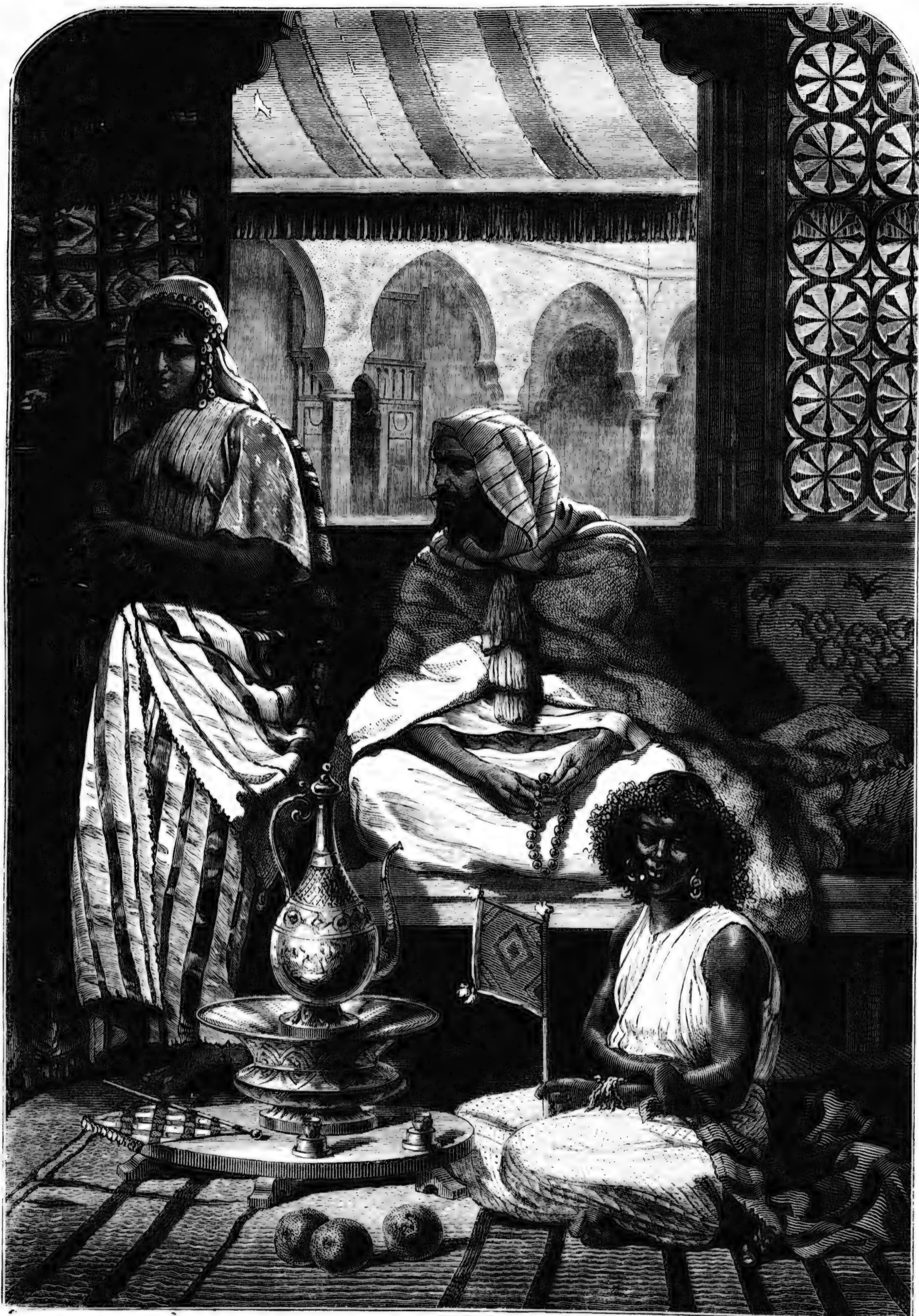
BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

The Fountain of Youth: Tales told from the Danish of Paludan Müller, by HUMPHRY WILLIAM FREELAND, late M.P. for Chichester, with illustrations designed by Walter Allen, engraved on wood by J. D. Cooper (London: Macmillan and Co.), is a good story; but the best qualities of the book lie in the pictures, perhaps. At all events, Mr. Cooper has done his share of the work with rare excellence. The tale would make a very good extravaganza, *Verbum sap.*

The fifth [sixth?] thousand of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by LEWIS CARROLL, with Forty-two Illustrations by John Tenniel, seems to have been reached during the year; and we are glad there is so much good taste and love of quaint riotous fancy in the world as this tale implies. Mr. Tenniel has never done anything better than some of these drawings. We are only echoing our contemporaries in saying this; but it is, we believe, strictly true.

Karl of the Locket, and His Three Wishes, by DAVID SMITH (Edinburgh: Nimmo), is a pretty little story of diablerie, love, and adventure, by, we believe, a younger brother of Mr. Alexander Smith. The tale is well told, and the snatches of song are marked by some genuine musical fancy.

The Child's Garland of Little Poems, by MATTHIAS BARR, with Illustrative Borders by Giacomelli (London: Cassell and Co.), is not remarkably good in any respect except the prettiness of the cover, which is well conceived and bright with gold and colour. The verses are, on the whole, conventional, but once or twice they approach originality of music. The book, however, has nothing unique about it, as a child's pleasure-book should have, if it professes originality.



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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1866.

THE INVALID'S CHRISTMAS.

We know—and are thankful for the knowledge—that our pages will be scanned by many weak and weary eyes at this season of the year; that amongst our readers will be many—some in the prime, others in the decline, of life—to whom holiday seasons make little difference in the dull round of the sick-room and the intervals of suffering. And yet we ask them whether, even to them, this blessed time, with all its sacred influences, does not bring some thrill of

pleasure, some realisation of that higher joy which surpasses mere merriment, though it may sometimes seem akin to pain? Lying on the couch or the easy-chair—which is, let us hope, only their temporary resting-place—can they not think of that Divine Life which, beginning with the Babe laid in the manger because there was no room at the inn, grew into sympathy with every phase of human experience—despising shame, triumphing over pain and temptation, and steadily disregarding even the last struggle of a

violent and dreadful death; looking only to the will of the Father, and too full of living faith to be at all anxious.

So long as it is our way to think that bodily pain and death are the worst things that can happen to us, we must pray to be brought to a better mind. "Weep not for me," said the Master, who sought no overweening pity for his sufferings, "but for yourselves and your children." The Divine unselfishness, the Divine self-sacrifice could not regard what



"THE CONVALESCENT."—(AFTER A SKETCH BY ALFRED BLADER.)

we call the ills of life as the real evil. Not to do the will of God; not to have perfect trust and confidence in the Infinite love, and goodness, and wisdom, is an evil immeasurably greater than a life of want and sickness and a death of agony. Then the invalid has sweet and gentle thoughts that come from the loving solicitude of others—can rejoice in the pleasures which others share more actively, and may shine like a faint but steady-beaming light amidst the glitter of the holiday festival by the force of loving interest in the general happiness.

"The poor, the needy, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and those who travel by land and sea"—are not these, too, the objects of the invalid's thought and care? for the soul that is bowed down is nearest perhaps to God, and readiest to pray for "all who are in any sorrow, need, or adversity." The spirit of Christmas—the spirit which should come to men when they think of what Christmas means to all mankind—seems to belong in no small measure to the invalid; for the strong are too apt to forget, and to glory in their strength.

THE STORY OF PETER GREWEL AND THE HOLLY GOBLIN.

COPPS farm they call it now; but when I was younger for forty years than I now am it was The Briars, and then old Ezekiel Pelham was the owner. Roundabout Pelham he used to be called, not because he was not a straightforward and upright man by any means—as some of the old tenants can tell you to this very day, a more liberal or kindhearted landlord was not to be found throughout Sussex—it was because of his build and the jollity of his ways that he came to be called Roundabout Pelham—a man without corners, as one may say, either to his mind or body; always saying his say downright and without reserve; and never guilty of the meanness of shuffling from a bargain, if there was afterwards found a legal hitch in it.

His managing man was Peter Grewel; and as some men are as like as peas in a pod, so was Peter as unlike his master as a pea to the pod itself, being thin and sour, and as cantankerous a fellow as ever stepped; and folk who didn't know that he was Mr. Pelham's nephew on the mother's side wondered that he should have so much influence with the old gentleman.

It's a bigish holding now, that of Copps's, but it was bigger by forty acres in Roundabout Pelham's time; and Peter lived up at the house with his uncle, who, I must tell you, had been a widower for many years, and had as his housekeeper a young woman whom, so the story went, he had come by in a strange sort of a way. How old she was when found lying on the doorstep of the house when the maid opened the door in the morning I can't trust my memory to say to a few months. There she was, however, quite a baby; and old Pelham, like the kindhearted old fellow he was, had the child cared for: found a nurse for her; and, when old enough, sent her to school, and, as she grew up, took her to his home just as though she was his own daughter. There were all sorts of tales as to whom the girl belonged, but that most believed in was that she was Peter Grewel's child; and why that tale was most believed in was this: there was a girl in the neighbourhood that Peter should have married, but didn't, and all of a sudden she went away and was not heard of for three months nearly, when she was found floating in Pelham's horsepond, on the very morning when the strange baby was found lying on Pelham's doorstep. Whether this tale ever got to Grewel's ears (and it could hardly have been otherwise in a small place like this) and was the reason why his spite was turned against the innocent cause, isn't for me to say. I only know, as the story goes, that his spite was turned towards the little lass, and, if he had had his way, she would have been sent packing.

But he didn't have his own way. She was a real good lass, and old Pelham took to her as kindly as though the wife he had buried had been her mother. He treated her just so, giving her the reins, as one may say, and allowing her to pay and take money whenever he was laid by with gout, which was pretty often, poor man! Everybody said that when Roundabout Pelham went off, and he was pretty well stricken in years by this time, Charlotte would be well cared for.

When I say that everybody said this, of course you'll understand that I don't include Peter Grewel. He didn't say a word on the subject, he only thought about it; and what sort of thoughts his were one had only to catch a glimpse of his face whenever Charlotte came in his way to be made aware. No wonder. Old Pelham had no relative in the world besides Grewel; and, if it wasn't for Charlotte, he would be pretty sure to step in for the whole of the property one day.

Well, the poor old fellow was found in his bed one morning dead. And after the funeral was over, "how about the will?" was the question, when, lo and behold! no will was to be found. High and low, every cupboard was ransacked, but no will!

Then Master Grewel turned round. Ever since the old man's death, not knowing how matters stood, he had been very humble and submissive towards the poor girl who might presently show herself his mistress. But now there was no will, and by right of the law "The Briars" and every stick and stone upon the place were his. He soon made his power felt, and Miss Charlotte was the first to feel it. Molly, the cookmaid, he said, could keep his house decent enough for him, and he meant to do without so expensive a faldern as a lady housekeeper. As Charlotte had all along been treated in no respect as a servant, she had never received what might be regarded as wages. Peter was not called on to pay her a penny; but, finding that it was her intention to take up her abode in a town about twenty miles distant, he generously defrayed her coach fare there, besides giving a man a shilling for carrying her luggage to the coach-office.

The tenants, too, speedily found out who was their master. In old Roundabout Pelham's time there was never any great hurry for the rent. It was due at Christmas time, but if paid within a month or six weeks afterwards there was no grumbling. Roundabout Pelham had made it a rule ever since he had held the land to provide a Christmas dinner for each and everyone of his tenants. If two oxen were not enough he slaughtered three for their roast beef, provided suet for the pudding, half a bushel of flour, and raisins and currants, with a nine-gallon cask of stinging ale of his own brewing, for every family.

But Peter Grewel knocked all this on the head. He never breathed a word of his intention till three days before Christmas time, when, since there appeared no preparations for ox-slaughtering, somebody gave him a hint. At first Peter pretended not to understand what was being hinted at; but when the tenant up and told him plainly, Peter fairly laughed in his face. Because he had inherited an idiot's property, he asked, did it follow that he must be an idiot too? Did the fellow know that fat oxen were worth a score pounds each? Was he aware that flour had gone up to famine price? Seeing how hopeless the case was, the man humbly urged that, because an ox was worth more this year than any year before, and flour was at famine price, that was the reason why the tenants and the labourers were more than usually anxious to avail themselves of the landlord's bounty. But Peter only laughed the louder when he heard this statement. "You are a very funny fellow," said he, "and I do love to encourage good-humour; here's a tizzy for you and be sure you drink me a happy new year at the Griffin on your way home. Or, stay: suppose you lay in a quart of ale with the money, and, when I call on you to-morrow for my rent, we'll drink together, and, if you have another good joke or two, we can have a laugh over them."

"Call for your rent to-morrow, Mr. Grewel!"

"Ay, to be sure, unless you happen to have brought it with you to-night. Have you? You're the sort of tenant. I only wish, Jones, that our elder wine was in good order for tapping. It's beautiful wine; your wife shall have the directions for making it, because you are a good fellow. Come into the parlour, my friend, and I will write you a receipt."

"Brought your rent to night!" cried poor Jones, for the old man spoke with such an appearance of earnestness that it was hard to

doubt that he meant what he said; "no, I haven't; how's it possible, Mr. Grewel?"

Then old Grewel pretended to get into a rage. "Now, you're a pretty fellow," said he, "to meet your landlord's demand for his just rent with a 'how's it possible?' You're a precious fine tenant to come looking up Christmas gifts. Be off with you, you rogue; you must be joking. Hey; you are joking, Jones. Well, well, jokes pass at this merry season. Get in the ale, that's a good fellow; and if on your way home you meet Brown, or Starling, or Noakes, be good enough to tell them that I gather the rents to-morrow. Praps they won't object to clubbing their tizzys with mine, and then we can have a gallon of ale and make quite a jolly evening of it."

"I can't answer for Brown or Starling, master," poor Jones answered, "but as for myself, you may take my word that if you was to kick me from here to Hanover you couldn't kick a year's rent out of me. I shall think myself a lucky man if I am able to pay up by the end of January."

"Oh! come, come, don't talk like that," old Grewel replied, trying to look much concerned; "I trust, for your own sake, Jones, that you are speaking what is not true. You've been a tenant on this estate close on twenty years, and it would go to my heart to turn you out—on Boxing Day, too, above all days in the year! Good-by!"

And, so saying, he banged the house door and left poor Jones to trudge home and spread the startling news that to-morrow old Grewel was coming after his rent, with the law in his hand to turn out everybody that couldn't pay.

And he was as good, or rather as bad, as his word. That very next day, which was the day before Christmas Day, Peter Grewel went the rounds for his rent, leaving a "man in possession" at every place where it was not paid. Such a thing as paying rent the day before Christmas Day was never heard of before, and it was thought at first to be an illegal proceeding on the part of old Grewel to exact it, and the indignant tenants clubbed for the six and eightpence and went up and asked the lawyer, and the best they got for their money was that their landlord was in order in the step he had taken, and that to resist him was to resist the Lord High Chancellor. So they hurried home, and begged and borrowed at cruel interest, and by night Peter had all his rent in. Never had his housekeeper seen him so cheerful. All that evening, and even after he got to bed, he continued reckoning up the money he had gathered and safely housed, as well as the sum he had saved from refusing to the tenants the Christmas gift they had so long been accustomed to rely on, until he had counted up the gross sum ten times over at least, and when he found that he could not make more of it, with a sigh he turned over in his bed to go to sleep.

But sleep wouldn't come, and for an hour or more he lay tossing and tumbling. With his face to the wall and his eyelids screwed together he heard the church chimes toll twelve, and then, to his amazement, he felt a slight tapping on the back of his head. It was much too slight to be a human tap—just a gentle patting, like what the paw of a kitten might make; still, the "tap, tap, tap" against the back of his skull was awfully human in its touch. Peter Grewel, however, was a man with a heart of brass; so, without opening his eyes, he rubbed the back of his head and cried "Hish!"

But the tapper, whoever it was, was not to be driven away. There was a minute's pause (during which Mr. Grewel chuckled to think how he had got rid of the nuisance), and then came "tap, tap, tap," again, just under the edge of his nightcap.

"Well, what is it?" asked Peter, quite loud and bold.

"Turn your face this way, Peter Grewel; I want to have a few words with you."

The voice was as tiny as the touch, and, with his heart bumping a bit by this time, Peter faced about, and at once discovered the shape of his mysterious visitor. It was no larger than a man's fist; but it had a head and a body, and legs and arms, and eyes to see, and a mouth to talk. In fact, it was every way like a man except as to colour, its face and body being of the scarlet of holly-berries and its arms and legs of the green of holly-leaves. Seeing nothing more formidable, Peter's courage returned.

"Hallo! Who are you?" he asked.

"My master's servant," replied the pigmy.

"And who may your master be, pray?"

"Christmas."

"Then he don't lodge here," replied the brutal Peter, grinning.

"It is a mistake. You've come to the wrong shop. Good-night!"

"He lodges everywhere to-night," answered the tiny thing, severely, and with a frown on its scarlet face. "He lodges this night and to-morrow night in every man's house, to make glad or to punish."

"Well, if he's a mind to make me gladder than I am, I have no objection," said Peter, "and I'll tell you how he may do it: just ask him to turn that bond of Noakes's into ready money, will you?"

"I have a question to ask you," said the terrible mannikin, not heeding Peter's ill-timed pleasantry. "Do you still refuse your tenants the gifts they have been accustomed to receive at this season?"

"Do I still refuse?" echoed Peter, his indignation raising him on to his elbows. "Why, of course I still refuse! You don't mean to tell me that anybody has been fool enough to put it about that I was likely to give in on that point? Why, look you here, Master Fairy or Goblin, or whatever you may be; there are eighteen families of these beggars, and that means nine bushels of flour to start with, and nine bushels of flour at"—

"Silence!" interrupted the imp, with a frown. "Yea or nay, will you voluntarily do as is requested of you? Be warned you had better."

"Look you here!" exclaimed Peter, in a passion, and sitting upright in the bed. "If you think me like those Methodist noodles who may be frightened out of their sober resolves by any sort of witchery or trickery, you are mistaken. You've got my answer; and you may go or stay according to your convenience. Not a penny or a penorth will I give to the whining beggars voluntarily or involuntarily. There! Now be off, for I'm going to sleep."

So saying, he flung himself down, and, shutting his eyes firmly, affected to be so very fast asleep as to be snoring. Still the Goblin lingered, and once again touched the pretending sleeper on the cheek; but he snorted with such fierce obstinacy at the touch that the mite of a thing saw it was mere waste of time to tarry any longer; so, shaking its scarlet head and with more of sorrow than reproach in its eyes, "We shall see," it said, and then vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Whether Peter Grewel slept well or lay awake, or was troubled with bad dreams, nobody but himself knew, and he was never heard to say. Anyhow, he was roused very early next morning. It was Molly—who had been promoted to the situation of housekeeper, and dairymaid, and cook, and, indeed, was the only servant living in Peter's house—that knocked, just at grey of Christmas morning, at the miser's chamber-door.

"I shan't get up just yet, Molly," growled Peter. "Bring me up a cup of tea and a bit of dry toast."

"If you please, master, here's Bill the herdsman come to speak with you," said Molly.

"Tell him to be off, and be hanged," roared Peter. "I don't want to hear any more about the hardship of turning his old mother out of her cottage. Let her go to the parish house, unless Bill can afford to keep her."

"It ain't about the old mother; it be about the beasts, master, I ha' come," replied Bill, who in his eagerness had followed Molly up stairs to the bed-room door.

"About the beasts!" And Peter was out of bed in an instant.

"What about the beasts, Bill? You don't mean to say that old Butcher has dropped her calf and that it's dead?"

"Wuss nor that, twenty times, master," replied Bill, dolefully; "and that's only counting a fat beast to be worth three new calves."

Bill brought out his news in this gradual kind of way, so that the weight of them might be broken, and he would much have preferred that the door remained between himself and his master until

he had said his say; but Peter Grewel's impatience and terror would not allow of this. Skipping out of bed, he bounced open the door, and, seizing the tall herdsman by the collar, endeavoured to shake him.

"Why don't you speak out, you booby? Why do you stand croaking there, you raven in man's shape?" he cried. "Tell me the worst. Quick!"

"Seven beasts out of thirty are dead," spoke Bill.

"What?"

"Seven beasts stone dead on the ground. That was the sight I see when I put my head in at the shed door this morning. When I left 'em last night, they were all well and hearty, and this morning seven of 'em dead and only fit for dogs'-meat," repeated Bill, spitefully, for he was, and not unnaturally, a bit savage at the way his master was treating him. So Bill the herdsman said, he never saw such a frightful change come over a man's face as came over Peter Grewel's when he heard the words. Whether it was all on account of the loss of his beasts, or whether along with the bad news came the recollection of the tiny holly-faced thing that had paid him a visit the night previously, nobody can tell. But he changed again almost before one could wink.

"So, so! And that is how the wind blows, is it? I offend your old witch of a mother yesterday, and in the night my cows die. Run for the constable, Molly; I'll hold the villain until you come back." And he tightened his grip on Bill's collar.

Molly was an obedient drudge, and ran down the stairs at once to fetch the constable; but when she opened the door, who should stand before her but the mealman, with his cap in his hand, and scratching his head, as though something very unusual had disturbed him.

"Is master in?" asked the mealman.

"Yes, he is; but you won't go up to him, if you take my advice," says Molly. "He's in a dreadful rage, and bitin' and snappin' at everybody. I left him stranglin' Bill the herdsman as I came down stairs."

"If he's bitin' and snappin' now, the Lord only knows what he'll do when he hears what I've got to tell him."

"You don't mean to say that you've brought more bad news?" whispered Molly.

"Bad news," repeated Davy; "the most wonderful news it was ever a man's ill-luck to be the bearer of. Look ye, Molly, praps you wouldn't mind breaking it to him. Last night!"

"What's that?" cried Peter from the top of the stairs. "Didn't I hear your voice, Davy?"

"Surely you did, master, and I heartily wish some other man was here to answer in my stead," replied Davy. "I'd ha' give any poor soul a penny to ha' done my errand, though pennies ain't over plenty with me, as you know, master."

"I know all about it, Davy," interrupted old Peter, impatiently. "Come up here quick; I've got hold of the villain that shall answer for the mischief. Come up here, my man, and help me, or he'll be breaking away!"

"You know all about it, hey! Well, now, that's a bit of luck for me," said Davy, skipping up the stairs and talking the while. "You know all about the waste of meal and the rats! Why, who could ha' brought you the news, master?"

But Peter Grewel was too much amazed to reply. His eyes stared and his teeth chattered, the top row against the bottom, and his grip on the herdsman relaxed, and he sank back on to the foot of the bedstead.

"About the waste of meal? About the rats?" said he, looking from one to the other, and speaking in a bewildered whisper.

"What does it mean? What does it all mean, Davy?" He knew that he might trust Davy, who was one of the lickspittle sort, and, for a sixpence or so extra a week, kept spy on every one else in Peter's employ.

"What it means is more than I can say, master," said Davy, all the while staring at the herdsman, and wondering what on earth he could have been up to; "but what has happened is just this:—Last night, when I looked in at the meal-loft, everything was as snug and safe as could be, and I locked the door and went to bed. Well, this morning, knowing as how you was out of meal for your porridge, I went up to the loft and put the key in the door to open it, when, at the same moment, I heard a scattering and a scuttling within, as though a flock of partridges had been disturbed. So I pushed the door open a bit, and what should I spy but the floor—which, I'll be bound for it, was sound enough last night—all gnawed into holes, twenty of 'em if one, and down every hole rats were squeezing and squeaking; while the bottoms eaten out of the sacks and the meal all spilt and dirty showed the mischief they had been at."

"But there can't be much meal wasted, Davy!" exclaimed old Peter, in a tremulous voice, when he had sufficiently recovered from his rage and astonishment to speak. "Rats, rot 'em! are not great eaters. Fifty of 'em couldn't eat a bushel of meal in a night."

"Then there must have been a score of fifties of 'em, at the very least; and that's the great wonder," replied Davy, scratching his head harder than ever in the extremity of his amazement. "I haven't measured it, but I'll warrant there's seven sacks of the meal devoured by the varmint."

"Seven sacks!" screamed Peter Grewel, starting up from the bedstead and collaring the herdsman again. "Do you hear, you villain? Seven sacks he says, and seven beast you say. Seven is the witches number. She shall pay! Your old beldame of a mother shall pay, or her bones shall, for this. She shall be tried and burnt. She shall be thrown into a ditch, to keep company with her friends the rats, the old devil's kin!"

Bill the herdsman was a slowgoing sort of man, and not at all quick at resenting injuries when directed at himself; but if there was anything on earth he had a special care for it was this old mother of his; so when he heard her called such vile names and accused of such diabolical practices, it put his blood up.

"Dang ye, ye old scurvyd re scallion! what d'ye mean by calling a good woman so? Hey! what d'ye mean?" And as he spoke he plucked away old Peter's hold on him as easy as though he had been a cat that had flown at him, and held him out at arm's length. "You're no longer master of mine, though I take the poor old ooman on my back and beg bread for her as I go," cried Bill, giving Peter a shake; "and only that I've got a bit of respect for myself, I'd put thy lying tongue past wagging." And with that he threw Peter back on to the bed, and strode down stairs and out of the house.

Very next day Bill's old mother was had up before the justice, though all the village followed her as she went limping along on her crutches, groaning and hissing at old Grewel and the constable. But no harm came to her. There were neighbours to prove that she lay a-bed ill with rheumatism on the night when Peter's meal and beasts were "blighted," and they carried her home again, hoarrring.

Well, to make a long story shorter, time passed, and Christmas came round again; and Peter's tenants wondered if they would fare better this year than last. The general impression was that they would not, though some opined that, after Peter's mysterious "visitation"—that is what they called it—of last year, he might be inclined to deal easier with them. The general impression was the correct one, however. Not a pint of meal, not an ounce of beef, would he give them towards keeping Christmas, though he well knew that it had been even a worse season with them than the preceding. He would see nobody on the subject; shutting himself up and bidding Molly keep to her kitchen, and let the dogs at the gate answer them if they came bothering. But, somehow, the tenants got wind of his disposition; and, after he had collected his rent and gone growling back to his den like the old bear he was, he had no visitors that Christmas eve.

Except one, the Goblin, with its head and body of the scarlet of holly-berries and its legs and arms of the green of holly-leaves. It seemed as though Peter had expected this visitor, for, soon as he turned into bed, he pulled the clothes over his head, which was not his custom—he would not even let his nightcap cover his ears for fear of the unheard approach of thieves—and extinguished his lamp, and immediately took to snoring as though he had been asleep for hours.

But he couldn't deceive the Goblin, which perched on the bump where Peter's head was, and applied its mouth to the spot where it knew Peter's ear must be.

"You are awake, Peter Grewel?" said the Goblin.

Peter snored heavier than ever, at the same time throwing up his clenched hand maliciously, just as might a man who dreams that an enemy is sitting on his head. But he might as well have attempted to strike the shadow of the naked wintry tree that the frosty moon reflected on his window-blind.

"You are awake, Peter Grewel," repeated the Goblin; "answer me. Will you in the morning, which will be Christmas morning, make amends for your neglect of yesterday, and give to the poor?"

Peter had made up his mind to lie still and let the Goblin have his say out, pretending to be all unaware of it; but the words "give to the poor" reminded him of his loss of last year, and he fiercely struggled to free his face of the bedclothes while the Goblin skipped on to the pillow.

"Hang the poor!" cried he. "Why should I give to the shiftless beggars? Will they give me back the beasts and the meal I lost last Christmas? Didn't they set witches at my goods who bred rats and bored rat-holes in my granary floor and cast me seven fat heifers? I'll see 'em starving, men, and women, and babies, before they shall have so much as an oat of mine that they don't pay for."

"Then you shall pay the penalty," said the Goblin, and vanished noiselessly as it came.

"Not such a penalty as I paid this cursed night twelvemonth," exclaimed Peter, jumping out of bed and hurrying on his clothes. "If watching will hinder it, it shall be hindered."

So he buttoned his overcoat and drew on his slouch cap with the ear-lappets; and, taking a lantern and his loaded blunderbuss, softly unbolted the outer door and went out. His first visit was to the beast-shed, where he counted the cattle stalled within, chuckling to find them all safe and hale and hearty. "It is hardly worth while going to the meal-house," said he; "it must be a cleverer rat than I ever saw that can gnaw through new plankings covered with tin. Still there'll be no harm in going to have a peep."

So he went to the meal-house and opened the door, and cast his lantern-light all around and into all the corners, and clucked again as he stamped on the tin-covered floor and found it so steadfast and firm.

"Give to the poor, indeed! Give to carpenter for his good work and to the tinker for his—that's a cheaper way; though, in truth, it cost me a plaguey round sum!" And he sat down on a bin to count up once more the cost of the new flooring and the tin, and grew so miserable that he was glad to get up and stamp over the capital rat-defying floor again to cheer his spirits.

It was now past midnight. "I will stay here a bit longer," said Peter; "for it is warmer than without; and then I will pay another visit to the beast-shed. And so I'll keep it up till morning, to and fro. I can lie a-bed all day to-morrow to make up for my loss of sleep to-night—lie abed all snug and warm, and make a good dinner off the broth of the bit of mutton we had at dinner to-day; and while these gormandisers are devouring pudding and Christmas beef they won't be half so happy as I shall in thinking of the many stones of beef I have saved through my night's watching."

So he waited till the church bell struck one, and the ringers who were waiting in the belfry took to ringing the Christmas peal; and then he stole out of the meal-loft and locked the door behind him, and made his way back to the beast-shed, hiding his lantern as he went. But when he entered the shed and threw the light before him, at the same instant he gave a loud cry, for out of the thirty live oxen he had counted as they stood on their legs scarce an hour since, there were now but twenty-three; seven lay dead and with their legs stretched out on the straw.

The cry that Peter had uttered was followed by a sort of stupefaction, during which he staggered through the shed, laying his hands on the dead oxen and touching their glazed eyes to assure himself that there was no life in them. Then he suddenly roused out of his stupor and grew furious. While the bells were merrily jangling and clanging in the steeple Peter raised his voice to blasphemy and swear, cursing Christmas for the ill-luck it brought him. With his loaded blunderbuss in his hand, he rushed madly here and there, peering into the dark corners of the shed; and then he ran outside, and searched the pits and the cart-house, and bad would it have been for any innocent tramp there lying asleep. But, happily, all was quiet; and, except the ringers in the belfry, no human being but Peter himself seemed astir. That being the case, the overflow of his hatred for his kind naturally took that direction, and he shook his fists at the church and pointed his gun at the loophole in the belfry where the ringers were setting the bells to mock him. Maybe he would presently have been wrought to such a pitch of madness as to have touched the trigger; but suddenly he thought of the meal-house, and that perhaps the Christmas imps had been at their pranks again this year as last, and, fast as his legs could carry him, he ran off to the loft, and, with a shaking hand, put the key in the keyhole.

But for a few seconds he had not the strength to turn the key, only to clutch at the door-handle and save himself from falling down the steep loft steps. The noise he had made had disturbed the rats, and he could hear them—could hear their squeaking and the scratching of their claws as they scampered over the tin-covered floor. When he did sufficiently recover to push the door open not a rat was to be seen—only the edges of the tin where it had been put down in squares all forced up, showing the gnawed holes beneath; and there, as last year, were the sacks with their bottoms eaten out and the meal all wasted and soiled upon the floor. Coming so soon after the spectacle of the beast-shed, Peter Grewel now was completely overcome; his head grew dizzy, and he reeled and fell down, happily on to one of the fallen meal sacks, or he might have been seriously hurt.

And there he lay till grey of morning, and then his senses returned to him. But his swoon, or fit, or whatever it was, had not softened his heart a bit. As he sat up and gazed on the wreck he only ground his teeth savagely; and, shivering with cold, he came out of the loft, sneaked to the house, got in unknown to Molly, went up to his bed-room, and there did what he never before in his life had done. There was a bottle with brandy in it in a cupboard, and from which the miser had been in the habit of sucking just a little drop when he was troubled with cramp in the stomach, which was not unfrequently, on account, no doubt, of his common custom of drinking cabbage soup at supper. Now, however, he took something more than a sip. He took the cork out with his teeth and dropped it, as though already determined that it should not be wanted again, and then his mouth and the bottle's met, and never parted till there were rattles in the throat of the latter, showing that its spirit had fled to the last drop.

When Molly an hour afterwards tapped timidly at his door to say that the herdsman wished to speak with him (not Bill, he had buried his mother and gone out of the parish months before), a strangely thick and hiccuppy voice replied that the herdsman might go about his business, as he, Peter, knew what had brought him there. The herdsman stared to hear this, and to make quite sure that his master *did* know what brought him there, begged Molly to go up again and ask him "what was to be done with them?" To which question Molly returned with the reply, "Go and tell the knacker to come and fetch them away." So that it was plain that he *did* know all about it.

But nobody else beside Peter knew about the rats in the meal-house. He had been his own mealman lately, finding it cheaper; and, lying drunk abed all that Christmas Day, next day he went, with hammer and nails, and nailed down the tin where the rats had forced it up, so that to all appearance nothing had happened. When he had finished his job and made the best of the spilled meal, he went home again, and, to Molly's great amazement, sent her for another bottle of brandy, and drank three-parts of it before he went to bed.

And next day, and the next, and the next, he drank more brandy. Somehow he made a shift to get through his daily business, though there was something so strange about his eyes (nobody suspected him, of all men in the village, of the folly and extravagance of

drunkenness) that led people to whisper that he was losing his senses, which gave them a clue to the mysterious death of the oxen. It was just at Christmas time, they recollected, when his mad fit first came on, and there could be no doubt that he had poisoned the seven beasts.

Whether Peter knew of these rumours is hard to say; if he did, it did not cure him of his sudden infatuation for brandy. He drank it at home, and he went into the town and drank it, and under its influence made many foolish bargains. He went to ruin fast, though his neighbours and tenants knew nothing of it. When all his money was gone he borrowed of the lawyers, until he had neither land nor houses to pawn, and was no better than a beggar.

So the next Christmas Eve found him. Still, somehow he managed to get a measure of brandy, and he carried it to his bed-room and drank it. "There's one consolation," he hiccupped, tipsily, as he got into bed, "I shan't be troubled by that infernal red and green imp to-night. The oxen may die and be hanged to 'em, for they are none of mine; if the rats eat down the meal-house it is only the rascally lawyers that will suffer."

But he was not to be let off so easily. Scarcely had he extinguished his lamp when he was conscious of something moving on his pillow, and, opening his eyes, there was the holly-coloured Goblin.

"You are awake, then?" it said.

"Wider awake, my little friend, than you found me last year," answered Peter, with all the boldness of a man in brandy armour. "I've drunk up all my meal, and all my oxen. I've drunk up everything, and made a clean cupboard. Just to save you trouble, that, my little friend."

"I can't go away empty-handed," said the Goblin, frowning; "you must provide a dinner to-morrow for me, somehow."

"Come and dine with me," grinned Peter, "I mean to have a herring to make me thirsty and a pint of brandy to quench my thirst. There's nothing else for you."

"Unless I take you!" exclaimed the Goblin, knitting its green eyebrows till they nearly concealed his holly-berry eyes, "but I prefer more wholesome meat."

This sobered Peter somewhat. "I have neither stick, nor stove, nor stone," said he; "don't be too hard."

"Still you must provide me with a dinner," replied the Goblin, "I'm billeted on you, and must have my dues. Last year and the year before I did pretty well; this year I must be satisfied with the best that may be. You have nothing here for me, I know. I will tell you what to do: rise early in the morning, and go into the wood and cut a bundle of holly, and carry it to the town, and sell it to whoever will buy for a penny. Don't think to cheat me, because I shall be there."

"Where?"

"In the holly bunch. You had better never have been born than fail me."

And, so saying, the Goblin vanished; and Peter Grewel, in whose brain the brandy was still humming, shortly after fell asleep. But he had had dreams, worse dreams than ever—and he had been dreaming badly lately—and before daylight he woke with the Goblin's last words still sounding in his ears.

"It is a shocking thing for a man to have to do," said Peter (he was sober now); "to stand on the pavement, like a match-seller, after being so well to do and prosperous! But it must be done. It would be a terrible matter to be carried off by that imp; and that's what his hint meant, I have no doubt."

So he hurried on his clothes, took a billhook, and went to the forest and cut a bough of holly, the finest he could procure, being almost afraid to look amongst its berries and leaves lest he should discover his enemy there. While it was yet scarcely daylight he hurried off with it and made his way to the town, which was about four miles distant, and there he stood, with his hat slouched over his eyes, holding out his holly for sale without saying a word. There were very few people astir yet, and they took no notice of him until, when he was called to the bone almost through standing there, he presently spied an old woman coming along the pavement. A single glance convinced Peter that she was a poor old woman, and he shrugged his shoulders and looked the other way, grumbling, "She has no penny to spend in holly, I'll wager."

And he was right; and then, again, he was wrong. The old woman had no penny to spend in holly—that is, no penny she could spare. Still, she had a penny; and when she saw the lovely bough Peter was holding out she paused wistfully before it. She had a little basket in her hand, and peeping out of it was a bottle, for all the world like a brandy-bottle; and when Peter saw it he licked his cold lips.

"D'ye want a handsome bough of holly, Granny?" he asked, eagerly. "It is only a penny; or, if you haven't a penny, I'll take just a nip of that for it," and he pointed eagerly at the brandy-bottle.

"Much good a nip of this would do you," replied the old lady; "it is cough stuff, you goose!—cough stuff for my poor little lodger. Not that she shall not have something nice, as well. There's another bottle at home, what the minister sent yesterday; and a little chicken, what the minister's wife sent; and a!"

"Well, if you don't want to buy a bough of holly, I don't care about your lodger and his good things. Why should I?" interrupted Peter, gruffly.

"It isn't a him—it's a she," replied the good-natured old soul; "and, though I've got but one penny in the world, she shall have that holly-bough to look at; it'll make her room look quite Christmasy, poor little heart." And with that she fumbled out her penny, and it and the holly-bough changed hands, and the purchaser trotted off, over the frozen pavement.

For a while Peter stood looking after her and turning the penny over in his fingers, and then he held it up contemptuously.

"What's the use of this?" said he. "If it had been twopence I know what use I could have put it to; but they don't make pen'orths of brandy—more's the pity. They make pen'orths of beer, and pen'orths of bread, and pen'orths of milk; but just what a man stands most in need of they won't let him have a mouthful of under twopence! The wickedness of putting such rubbish as cough-mixture in a brandy-bottle!" continued Peter, still looking after the old woman, who was by this time a long way down the road. "But what about the other bottle! She said there was another bottle at home! P'raps there is brandy in it. Since she shows herself so good-natured towards that lodger, may be she wouldn't mind giving a fellow a drain of it this cold morning."

So he followed after the old woman, and by-and-by saw her enter a little cottage with a tall hedge in front of it, and a little gate at the side that led to where the pump and the washhouse were. But Peter couldn't make up his mind to go and tap at the door. "That will look so much like begging," thought he, as he stood a little way off. "I'll wait a little till she comes out again, and then I'll get into conversation with her and contrive to ask her about the brandy."

So he waited and waited, not growing bolder the colder he grew but more faint-hearted, all the morning and into the afternoon, shivering and empty, and cursing his folly in not hastening home hours ago, but unable to leave the chance of a drop of brandy. "I'll wait till dark now," said he, "and then I'll go and knock at the door."

It is soon dark at Christmas-time, and then Peter stole in at the side gate and listened at the window. The blind was drawn, but above, at the top pane, a large piece of the holly had been stuck. Peter knew that it was his holly from the size and beautiful colour of the berries, and as he looked at it, what should grow in it—no bigger than a finger's length—but the face and body of the Goblin, with its scarlet head and its green arms and legs. Its face was no longer than one's thumb-nail, and it was not angry, as when Peter had last seen it; and it held out one of its tiny fingers, beckoning him. It didn't beckon him to go round to the door, however; it evidently meant, from the crook of its finger and the wagging of its red head, "Climb up on the window-sill, and peep in over the blind."

It was easy enough to do this, for his drinking had brought Peter down to little better than a skeleton; so he stepped on to the ill, and, being a tall man, was able to look into the room at the

upper panes. And what he saw must have been very astonishing since his face turned deadly white, and he would have cried out, only that the Holly Goblin, who was now on a level with him, held up a finger and warned him to make no noise. And had he remained the same old Peter, he must have obeyed the Goblin's injunction; but as the man looked he was changed, and his lips trembled, and, giving utterance to a cry that sounded like a woman's name, he slid off the window-sill and lay huddled without motion in the snow.

And there he would have lain had not the Holly Goblin been kind enough to twitch its house from the fastening, and fall with it with a crackle and a clatter down on to the floor.

"Why, what can that be, my dear," exclaimed the old woman, and she got up to see and raised the blind and looked out. And there she saw Peter in the snow, and hurried out and raised him up, and when he had come to a bit asked him to come in and warm himself and take a cup of elder wine this blessed Christmas night; and he, half unwilling and shaking like a child in dread of a beating, was led into the little parlour. But as soon as he crossed the threshold and the old woman had said to the poor young thing who lay so pale and wan on the sofa before the fire, "Why, I do declare, deary, it's the poor beggar-man I brought the holly of this morning," Peter cried out again just as he had cried out when he hopped from off the window-sill, and fell with his face to the hearthrug; and the poor young thing she too cried out, and would have fainted outright had not the prostrate man caught her hand as it hung down, exclaiming, "My daughter! Oh, Christ! that was born this day, forgive a wicked wretch!" hearing which the young woman rose, with her white face flushed red, and bade Peter get up and look at her.

Then she knew him, but only as the hard bailiff that had turned her out from the home she had grown up in. But, kneeling there still, with her hand in his, before the log fire, and before the old lady to whom the cottage belonged, who could do nothing as she listened but raise her apron from time to time to her tearful eyes, he told her different; all about the poor woman, her mother, whose body was found in the pool; he told her, as well, of his villany towards her, and begged and prayed her forgiveness; and giving it, she told him the story of her privations and struggles against temptation, of her long, long illness, and the kindness of the worthy old soul who had sheltered her. And when that was all over, there were the three crying one against the other; but, as everybody knows, the gladness that tears express is not uncommonly of a purer quality and more enduring than that which is accompanied by mirth and shouting.

In this case so it proved; for ever since, thanks to Peter Grewel's creditors, who were moved to compassion, he has lived in one of the smallest of what were once his own cottages, humbly and in peace, with his daughter Charlotte. And when Christmas comes round, there above where their little feast is spread is sure to be found a goodly bough from the Goblin bush, and though the little fellow is never seen amongst the leaves and berries, it is not altogether conclusive evidence that he is not present.

J. G.

CARRIERS' CARTS AT CHRISTMAS.

THOSE people who have sent parcels to loving friends as a seasonable reminder of good-will; or those less enviable (for it is better to give than to receive) who are expecting a turkey, or a hare, or a bundle of game per carrier, will have sustained a very severe shock, if in the interval of acknowledgment or anticipation they should have gone along the Old Bailey at about dusk any time during the Christmas week. In the awful confusion of the feathered tribes, of boxes, bundles, packages, baskets, bottles there visible, hope will sink in their hearts, and they will feel that life is a lottery in which they may be quite likely either to lose, to win, or to have to submit to an exchange.

And yet the carriers are a sedate, a methodical, and an orderly race. Witness John Peerybingle, witness the willing Barkis; and there are few disappointments as compared to the enormous aggregate of satisfaction. A flock of stray geese, a truant turkey, or a wandering hamper or two, there must be now and then. But when we remember how these things have come cross journeys from all sorts of remote country places or outlying suburbs, and are destined to travel to unfindable neighbourhoods, where there are no numbers on the doors—or, what is worse, where the Board of Works has re-numbered every house, and whole roads are "terraces," and "villas," and "houses," and "lodges," and "cottages"—who can wonder at a trifling omission? For the packages must be transferred from one trusty messenger to another; and those comfortable tilted carts, having jogged along for many a mile, all meet, at last, in the Old Bailey, where, in the very shadow of the gaol of Newgate, they exchange their contents, that the dwellers in the enigmatical outskirts of the great city may not wait in vain for the compliments of the season.

THE CHRISTMAS SONG.

THERE is nothing more trying to the nerves than to have to sing a song while one is sitting as one of a company at a well-appointed table after dinner. Well, perhaps it is nearly as trying to have to listen to anyone else, especially if that person be one of those regularly recognised individuals who say, "What shall I give you, comic or sentimental?" and is ready, in accordance with the answer, either to fix his eye on some imaginary fly walking on the ceiling, and let all his facial muscles droop into pathos, or to sit in a round-shouldered way and, bringing his right hand upon his knee with a sort of sweeping motion, commence, in a hysterically funny voice, by the interjection "Oh!" to inform us that "there once lived a man," or that "A cobbler there was," or adjuring us "To listen to" him, which we are all of us unfortunately compelled to do, since he has possession of our attention, and resents, by a sternly-deprecatory look, any attempt to whisper to our next neighbour.

It may, perhaps, be taken for granted that there is no greater proof of the happy, genial, considerate temper fostered by Christmas and its old associations than the fact, that at that time we are most of us willing to give the aspiring songster his full fill, and to bear, not only attentively, but actually with beaming faces, his preposterous assumption of a talent for amusing a company.

And yet there are occasions when some comparatively modest guest, suddenly called upon by the jolly host who has long known his social worth, breaks into song, and trills a Christmas carol that finds an echo in every heart, softened by good cheer and loving influences. There are people who can chirp like robins at the well-spread board—like robins who come in out of the cold world outside, and, basking in the light and warmth of love, break out into a little, sweet, plaintive song of grateful praise. Such we can listen to just as we can sit motionless, all eye and ear, when the redbreast hops on to the frozen sill of our window on the morning of the Nativity and tries to wake us to good and peaceful thoughts to all mankind.

Always to be listened to with reverence also is the song of the genial, large-hearted man who has gathered a clustering score of true friends round his board. He has carved the turkey, seen to the wine, watched with jovial anxiety the well-being of every guest; has studied their favourite cuts; has judiciously taken wine with the poorer relations, who might have thought themselves neglected; has cut jokes and joints together, and, after his unctuous labour, leans back radiant in his chair. The cloth is cleared; the wine and fruit sparkle in the light of the brightly burning candles; for it is a country house. The deep ruddy glow from the burning log in the grate makes a hundred twinkling reflections, a dozen dancing shadows, amidst glass and silver and the glistening holly-leaves upon the wall. His wife has gathered the children into a group, the youngest on her knee (happy is he, for his quiver is full of them!), and he looks round with a moist twinkle, a kindly light, in his eye. "Come, Harry, get the concertina, and just put in a bit of an accompaniment. I must sing you the old song, dear friends; even if you are tired of hearing it, I will sing it once more."

Once more, good, loyal heart! Two score of times, if it please Heaven; and so let us fill our glasses at your bidding with wine as generous as your own ripe nature, and listen to a voice that makes the old oak rafters ring with a song of true Christmas welcome.



"THE EXILE'S RETURN."—(DRAWN BY ALFRED SLADER.)—SEE PAGE 391.



CARRIERS' CARTS IN THE OLD BAILEY ON CHRISTMAS EVE.



THE CHRISTMAS SONG.—(DRAWN BY E. D. PRISTON.)

DOROTHEA.

I.

THE Poor Poet's landlady had a little daughter who was very ill, and his wailing disturbed him so much that he stepped softly from his garret, tapped at her door, and asked if he could go for a doctor, or in any way help her in her trouble.

"Thank you; no, Sir," said the landlady, shaking her head, and not turning round from the bed of the poor child over which she was bending. The Poet saw that she was crying. He had in his hand a blush-rose which he had within a few hours picked up, just as it had fallen from the hair of the most beautiful woman in all the world, and now a sudden thought came over him. He looked at the blush-rose, kissed it fondly (this the landlady did not see him do, because he was so sly), and, approaching the couch of the dying girl on tiptoe, laid the blush-rose upon her bosom, whispering, scarcely as if he intended it to be heard,

"From the most beautiful that blooms to the most beautiful that fades."

But the landlady, having sharp ears, distinctly heard this whisper, and thought to herself,

"He is in the right to call my daughter most beautiful; but he is rather conceited if he thinks he himself is so blooming and so beautiful."

Thus, we see that, not being herself poetical, the landlady quite mistook the meaning of the Poet's words. She did not imagine for a moment that he had a very beautiful sweetheart, nor did she understand that politeness and the law of antithesis required that the construction of the Poet's sentence should be just what he had made it. In fact, the Poor Poet had not only made a sacrifice of affection in parting with the blush-rose; he had also broken a most solemn vow, having quite recently sworn that it should lie in his bosom for ever. It is true he had sworn by nothing particular.

Now the name of the most beautiful woman in all the world was Dorothea.

II.

The Poor Poet descended the stairs very softly and passed into the street. In the fashionable part of the town he happened to meet a Malignant Swell, for whom he had once written a valentine, and who snelt most offensively of patchouli, Tonquin bean, or something of that kind.

"Ah! Good-day! How d'ye do?" said the Swell, waving a salute.

And the passers-by, who were all of them members of good society, thought this very polite of the Swell; but the Poet knew that it was only his impudence, and made answer,

"Thank you. Quite well enough to keep my faith that the sun will rise to-morrow, though a midge stings me in the sunset when the frogs croak."

"Ya—ah—ah—ah—ah!" said the Swell. "I—ah—don't understand your figurative language—ah—by Jove!"

Now, the Poet did not remind him that he had once bought some of it in a valentine. He only said,

"You have no imagination."

"Ah—ah—ah!" replied the Swell; "you—ah—you have no money."

Just at that very moment up came his groom, touching his hat, of course, to his master, and leading the most lovely horse in the town. The Swell mounted swiftly to the saddle, and, with his eyeglass poised on his left eye, turned round towards the spot where he had left the Poor Poet, saying, with a wave of his delicately-gloved hand,

"Ah, ah! Tah-tah! I'm going to take a threethree among the quality, and the beauty, and the fashion, and the . . . By—ah—Jove—ah! where ith he gawn?"

He might well ask that question. It was quite true what the Malignant Swell had just before told the Poor Poet—namely, that he had no money; he hadn't a farthing, and, having just parted even with his blush-rose to the sick baby, he felt so exceedingly empty that he was unable to bear up under the taunt of poverty, and immediately rode off upon his Pegasus. Of course, a Pegasus goes very fast, and the consequence was that he was out of sight in a moment.

"Thaw a creditor coming up, I thuppothe—ah, by Jove! ah—thwift runner—ah, ya—ah, by Jove! ah—gawn down a by-threethree—by Jove! ah!" said the Malignant Swell, as he rode off.

III.

After lingering a short time over the tops of the sycamore-trees, the Poor Poet's Pegasus galloped straight up towards a place in the sky where the white clouds had just rolled back like gates and disclosed an endless gulf of very deep and luminous blue. The beautiful creature entered the gates and made haste along the bridge-roads of heaven, hour after hour, the only sound being the jingle of his own rein, an occasional word of cheer from the Poet, and a musical sound from some white globe or other whirling at a moderate distance off. And soon it was night. Constellated stars lay around like brotherhoods of flowers in the gardens of the skies; and the Poor Poet was borne swiftly and pleasantly along dark, wide thoroughfares of firmament, sometimes losing sight even of suns and planets—unless here and there some universe of star-dust showed like a doubtful drop of twinkling light in the incalculable, unfathomable distance—seeming further and fainter than a lamp in a cottage window to the wanderer who crosses the first edges of a moor.

At last, however, the Poet caught sight of a moving mist of illuminated faint purple bearing straight down upon the darkness, from which the hoofs of the horse struck now and then a spurtle of diamond sparks as he flew. The living-blue brightness, though it moved straight on, like God's messenger in our dreams, throbbed and fluctuated like the heat of a furnace, and rose and fell like a wave or a tree in the wind, and winnowed away the blackness before it and around it.

"It is an Angel," said the Poet; "I dare not speak to it, for I was rude to the Malignant Swell, and my conscience is not clear. Let me turn aside and watch."

So saying, he drew rein, and the horse made a pause at the side of the path.

"A little farther back," said the Poet. And so they stood waiting and watching behind a voluminous bulging cloud, with a rift in it, through which the Poet could see everything.

But his ears speedily made him aware of a very faint moaning or yearning sound coming up from below; and, turning to look in the direction from which the sound proceeded, the Poor Poet saw a bright little ghost, as white as a pond-lily in the moon-shine, rushing upwards towards the point from which the Angel was coming, with inconceivable swiftness. Close upon its track, stretching out eager but helpless-looking arms, for ever trying to grasp the skirts of the baby ghost, came a phantasm, not so white, much more faintly traced upon the blackness, and yet visible to the eye. The Poor Poet discerned in a moment that it was the phantasm of a woman; and he knew that the soft, sad, low, yearning sound came from this phantasm. Turning now again for a moment to the point from which the Angel was sweeping down the long heavens towards where he hid himself from the glory, the Poet observed that the winged, moving, purple brightness had come thousands of celestial fathoms nearer, and was dilated to the size of an aurora that fills the sky. Almost before he had time to turn his eyes from the east to the west, the lily-bright baby-ghost was waited past him. As a meteor falls to the earth when it comes within the sphere of its attractive force, so the tiny gleaming ghost was drawn towards the stupendous winnowing purple creature, and caught up into it, and gathered, and lost, and borne away as in the fold of a garment, or a mighty wind. It was done in a flash, as a wonderful thing befalls in a dream, and for a moment the Poet was deaf, dumb, and blind; only a perfume that made him feel as if he himself were part of the glory filled his nostrils for that infinite, unfathomable instant. The last sound he heard was a yearning cry from the phantasm of the mother; the last sight he distinctly saw was the phantasm of the blush-rose he had that morning laid on the

bosom of the child; and it was held aloft for a token in the baby's hand. So, of course, the Poor Poet knew that his landlady's daughter was dead now and that the mother's thoughts were following it up to heaven. In the remotest east he could now just see a fast-receding gold-blue winnowing mist, not larger than the smallest comet or the tassel of a laburnum.

IV.

After this, the Poet came down again without loss of time; but he did not reach the earth in the very best of humours, for a Pegasus has usually a languid, jolting, unpleasant way of descending. He goes up cheerfully enough, and at a pace which is delightful to the rider; but he never likes the first sensation of coming back again. The Poet himself shares this feeling; but with him it is only a passing sensation, for, if you give him time to think, he is wise enough to know (in consequence of the relativity of human knowledge) that if he had no Down he would have no Up.

As it happened, the Poor Poet, being perhaps unwilling to return straight to the house of mourning, guided his Pegasus back to the sycamore wood. Oh! the trees looked very beautiful, and the air that blew around their tops were as sweet to the Poet as the perfume that he remembered up aloft—sweeter, he said; but that was only for the moment, because poets have strong feelings, and they often have to look through a whole dictionary to find words fit to express themselves with. I knew a poet—but he was very excitable—who used frequently to search through the lexicons of several languages for words strong enough to express his feelings. When he had got into his head a Dutch word, and a Greek word, and an English word, and a Lapp word, and a Persian word, and a word out of the slang dictionary, he used to let them knock each other about in his head-piece till they struck fire, and at last he would coin a new phrase of his own. At first people would look hard at it, and say it was bad money; but at last, when they had been for some time abusing the poet for a smasher, the new coin got into circulation, though, to speak truth, people went on abusing him all the same.

However, while the Poor Poet of whom we were just now speaking, was hovering on his winged horse over the beautiful sycamore-trees, he peeped down through a rift in the thick of the boughs, just where the sunshine went straight down, like a long white shaft, and he saw a sight which made him pause, and pat the neck of his Pegasus, saying "Steady, steady!" though so very softly as not to be heard by anyone but the creature himself. This sight was nothing else but the Malignant Swell, dressed in the first style of fashion, paying his addresses to the Poor Poet's own Dorothea. Not that she had said she considered herself engaged, or had spoken to her parents, or, indeed, been distinctly told by the Poor Poet that she was beloved; but this sort of thing is usually left out of account by poets, being considered of no consequence. But it must not be concealed from the reader that the Poor Poet, when he wrote the valentine for the Malignant Swell, had composed it in the form of a beautiful acrostic, which in the first letters of the lines spelt the name of Dorothea, and in the last his own; and this had not escaped the highly intelligent and appreciative eye of the lady herself, though the Swell was too stupid to find it out. If it should seem to you a dishonourable action on the part of a poet to put his own acrostics into another gentleman's valentine, for which he has received payment, I must inform you, first, that all is considered fair in love (because, since love is the beginning of everything, everything must give way to love, or else everything would not be anywhere); secondly, that the price of the valentine was only five shillings; thirdly, that the Malignant Swell had had the meanness to go on trust for it, and had been overheard to declare that he never intended to pay the Poor Poet for his labour. So it was all fair.

Now, Dorothea's father, who was on the verge of ruin, had instructed his daughter, on pain of his displeasure, to encourage the addresses of the Malignant Swell for at least a time; so that, he being kept in good humour, her father might the better be enabled to negotiate a loan for ten or twenty thousand pounds, repayable to the Swell by promissory notes at three, six, nine, and twelve months' date respectively. This motive he had concealed from Dorothea; but of course she stood in terror of a father's curse (her father was too polite to mention that, though he meant it—he said displeasure); for, as is well known, the curse is always confirmed by Heaven itself; so that the child who is cursed by a parent (particularly a father because a father is always a man), whether the child is right or wrong, invariably breaks out into boils all over, and never succeeds in anything afterwards. This is a well-known fact, because all the cases in which parents have cursed their children have been written down in a register, along with all the histories of the children cursed, who have for the most part, after much suffering from poverty and cutaneous diseases, been torn in pieces by lions on the coast of Barbary. Writers of plays and novels will, if requested, confirm this statement.

Just at the very moment when it occurred to the Poor Poet to look down into the sycamore wood the Malignant Swell happened to have been popping the question to the beautiful Dorothea. Instead of being referred to her parents, which he had fully expected, he received a reply which, owing to a confused noise overhead, was totally inaudible, though the exquisite lips of Dorothea were distinctly seen by him to move.

"What wath that thound?" said the Swell, looking up and about, with his eyeglass stuck in his left eye, as usual—"what wath it?"

"It was only a zephyr," said Dorothea.

"Thephyr?" said the Swell, to himself, "now what ith a thephyr?" Of course, he was ashamed to say this out loud, because Dorothea would have immediately concluded that his education had been neglected. However, the real cause of the sound was the nervous movements of the Poet on his Pegasus up among the sycamore tops. So little do we know the true sources of the things that impress our minds. Only the other night I happened to remark to a poet that the wind was moaning. "That sound," said he, "was the sigh of a thousand spirits." But he offered no proof of his assertion, and poets are so touchy that I did not like to ask him a question.

"But," resumed the Malignant Swell, sidling and bridling in his limp, stupid way up to Dorothea, just like a daddylonglegs with whiskers and dress-boots, "but, my dear Madam, what anther wath it you gave me? I didn't hear it, you know, by—ah—Jove—ah!"

"Oh," replied Dorothea, with a very sweet smile, "I gave you an evasive answer!"

"Now, the denthe!" said the Swell to himself, "what makth women talk Hebrew? Whath an evathive anther, I wonder?" And then, out loud, "My dear Madam, you are too good, too very kind; yaath, by Jove!—ah—the denthed kind of you (I beg your pardon for thwearing) to give a fella an evathive anther, you know, by Jove—ah!"

"Oh! pray don't speak of it," replied Dorothea; and at that very moment the Poor Poet distinctly saw her hide her face in her fan. As for Pegasus, he quite lost self-control, and laughed out loud.

"Hush! hush!" said the Poor Poet, patting his mane. It is one of the peculiarities of a Pegasus that he will have his own way. He will be noisy when you want silence, laugh when you want to cry, and cry when you want to laugh. But that is his mettle. You cannot expect him to be like a rocking-horse, or a velocipede, or an industrious flea.

"What noithe wath that?" said the Swell.

"Only a zephyr," answered Dorothea.

"You thaid that before, by Jove!" replied the Swell, a little nettled, pointing his forefinger at her with a penetrating look in his eye, or rather in his eyeglass; "that'th twithe you've thaid thephyr! now it thounded to me like a horthel-laugh."

"I dare say, Sir," said the lovely Dorothea, "you can hear better than I can; your ears are so long."

Now the Malignant Swell took this for a compliment (he was such a very stupid man), and, blushing up to his eyeglass, murmured,

"May I then hope?"

When the Poor Poet caught these words, and noticed that Dorothea hesitated in answering the question, he was so disturbed in his mind that he involuntarily kicked Pegasus, who, plunging down hastily among the sycamore-trees, made a noise overhead that had a very

peculiar effect upon the mind of the beautiful lady. She really did not know what to say to the Malignant Swell in reply to his question, for the thought of her aged father's pecuniary difficulties somehow confused her ordinarily ready and inexhaustible wit. It is very probable she might on this occasion have said something foolish, and committed herself.

Now, it is against the etiquette of courtship for a young lady to commit herself; and this young lady was, besides, in love with the poor Poet, though she did not know it herself, so great was her innocence. But she was saved. The rustling in the tree-tops had upon her young mind the curious effect of reminding her of some beautiful verses of the Poor Poet. I regret that I am unable to quote them, not having a copy of his works; but I am in a position to say that they related to Love, Truth, Beauty, Trust, and things of that nature. The consequence of Dorothea's remembering these fine verses was that she felt herself quite unable to make an evasive, much less an encouraging, answer to the Swell. A tide of emotion made her silent. Her bosom rose and fell underneath her bodice in sweet, soft pants, and she hid her drooped face behind her fan. Looking down through the trees from where he sat, the Poor Poet could distinctly perceive that the nape of her neck was crimson.

"They thay," resumed the Swell, "that thilenth givth content. May I offer you my arm, Madam?"

So she took his arm, and they walked out of the wood together.

V.

Poets know more than other people; but there are things that poets do know, and things that poets do not know. When this particular Poet saw his beautiful Dorothea hide her head, and that the nape of her neck turned red, and when he saw her walk off, leaning, as he thought, upon the arm of the Malignant Swell, he rashly concluded that she had consented to be married to him. It was impossible for him to know, especially as he was a very modest poet, that Dorothea had been blushing at the thought of some of his own verses, and he was not close enough to tell that, in reality, she was not leaning on the arm of the Swell, though she had taken it in common politeness. If the Swell had not been a thick-skinned fool, he would have known at once, by the very touch of a lady's finger-tips, how she felt towards him. But though he had the figure of a daddylonglegs, he had the sensibility of a rhinoceros. A more stupid young man I never met; and I do not believe he would have known the touch of Dorothea's lips from that of any other lips in creation. So, even if the Poor Poet had not loved Dorothea himself, yet to see her along with him, arm-in-arm, was as irritating a sight to him as a jackass eating strawberries; supposing a jackass would do it, which I neither affirm nor deny.

Burning with indignation, the Poor Poet returned to the solid earth; upon his touching which, the feeling became instantly changed into jealousy. This made him ashamed of himself; but what could he do? He could not possibly continue to exist in the air without intermission; and the very moment he came down he was troubled by Passions, just like a costermonger, only he had the advantage of remembering how he had felt when he was up high, and was kept in check by the knowledge that if he was guilty of any meanness he would have to pay some heavy penance before he could go up high any more. Besides, he knew by his Art, which is, after all, a kind of magic, that, even if Dorothea were to belong to the Swell, she could never be the Swell's. This may seem paradoxical; but such is poetry.

VI.

Being, as I have said, very poor—often quite hungry, indeed—and very much excited, the Poet did not at first see his way to doing anything. His mind was much occupied with waking visions of Dorothea's beauty, especially that portion of it which he had last beheld—namely, the nape of her neck, with the lovely, crisp curls running about everywhere over the smooth, white skin, like the tendrils of a golden creeper. This kept him in a constant state of excitement; indeed, this very comparison is his; and, absurd as the notion of a golden creeper may appear to you and me, it came quite natural to his enthusiastic imagination. At first, poor fellow! he thought of eloping with Dorothea upon the pegasus; but this was only a wild, passing fancy; for he knew, as well as I do, that a pegasus will only carry one, and not always that. But he pleased himself, and passed the time by going up high as often as he could, and galloping about in the hope that he might meet the phantasm of Dorothea somewhere in the clouds. He made such a practice of this that numbers of the planetary people came to know him—just as you and I know the young man that waits at the corner of our street for his sweetheart every evening.

One day, when he had been waiting and gazing in the heavenly places till his heart ached and his eyestrings cracked, with an unusual longing in his heart to behold the phantasm of Dorothea, it suddenly struck him that he had omitted to do something down below which he had faithfully promised his landlady to do that afternoon. This, to speak truth, was nothing more nor less than to take her in from the grocer's an ounce of green tea for her own use, as she had a severe headache. A swift pain shot through his heart, and his first thought was to obey his conscience and plunge down to his landlady with the tea, for he had got it in his pocket all ready. But he could not bring himself to keep this good resolution, and he said to himself, with a mighty heart-pang,

"I will see Dorothea—my love shall compel her to my presence."

Now he had scarcely thought this thought when the phantasm of Dorothea floated up to him slowly, with her face set towards him. He saw her as plainly as ever he had seen her in all his days, only tenfold fairer, tenfold dearer. But, apparently, she did not see him. Her beautiful eyes were fixed upon some glory of some upper firmament, some heaven of heavens, and he could not make them meet his own, though the expression of her countenance was divinely sweet. At last, he stretched out his arms as the shape drew near, and called aloud,

"Dorothea, my life, my love, my treasure!"

But she did not look into his eyes, and even as he spoke she passed him like a breath. He was conscious that she had not swerved by the breadth of a moon-film from the path which led straight up to where he waited; neither did he swerve himself. The beautiful phantasm passed through him, thrilling him like a wind that shakes a harp-string, and was gone. The Poet rocked, swooning, down to earth, upon his Pegasus.

VII.

Not knowing that he had come home from his evening jaunt, the landlady looked into his room at the usual hour, to see that it was all in order for the night, and was very much surprised to find the young man kneeling down by the bedside.

"He is saying his prayers," thought she, and politely drew back; but just at that moment he fell forward on the bed so heavily that her womanly instinct told her he was ill. So she went up to him and tried to raise him. Poor young man! He was quite light-headed. He folded his hands like a little child, and, looking up to Heaven, just murmured, "And forgive us our trespasses . . ."

That was all she could get out of him. So she put him to bed and sent for a doctor. But, smelling the tea, she felt for it in his coat-pocket, and the tears came into her eyes as she said to herself,

"The kind, good, thoughtful young man!"

So she had not the least idea what he was thinking of when he said "trespasses." Poets have often told me that this kind of situation is not uncommon; and, for my part, I think it is rather affecting.

VIII.

Under the circumstances, the Poor Poet thought he could not do better than compose a Great Poem which should immediately regenerate mankind; which, while it exposed the Malignant Swell, should elevate his character; and which should place the Poet himself on such a pedestal of honest glory in the eyes of all the world that Dorothea would inevitably be his by natural selection; the most beautiful being necessarily attracted towards the most melodious. It did not escape his mind that not even Dorothea and a poet could, as a practice, feed on laurel; but he naturally concluded that so great a poem would sell by millions of

copies: so that difficulty would be at an end. I could not describe to you the vision which the Poet had of the regenerated earth, with all the envy, and the greediness, and the injustice, and the stupidity cauterised out of the hearts and souls of men. He saw the world a City of God, builded of ivory and gold. Kindled by his song, a selecting fire had swept through the city and burnt out all the plague. Only Heaven and the Poor Poet were in the secret. The men and women had wrung their hands, and wailed, struggled, and fought like tigers, for what the fire had come to burn away for ever. They thought it was goodly and precious; or, at least, that without it all that was goodly and precious would be lost to them, and they fought against the fire as if for their lives. It was now night. Exhausted and heart-sick, the people slept, tossing in troubled dreams of charred palaces, and crumbling churches, and gutted homes. But the Poor Poet and the angels of heaven saw with the eyes of truth; saw the ivory and the gold; knew that the city was divine; knew that there should be no more weary feet and weeping eyes. The night was passing, and still the people slept. The morning was at hand. The breath that awakes the dawn floated over the tree-tops. The great gonfalon of God began to unfurl in the eastern sky. Already the Poet saw the trumpet set to the lips of the archangel whose task it was to arouse the sleepers. A moment more, and they will arise in the streets of the city, and, lifting up joyful hands, break into singing as with the voice of many waters. Only a moment more; and why, oh! why, is that moment infinitely subdivided, prolonged—no, there is no word for that—can a moment be eternal? The Poor Poet lifted his languid eyelids, and looked up. He saw nothing but the face of Dorothea painted in the air; her beautiful blue eyes looking straight into his, with the love that is stronger than death.

"I am glad," he whispered, with a faint smile to his landlady, who was bending over his bed; "I am glad that I woke in time to see this;" and so turned his face to the wall. He woke no more; but as the gray, cold evening was now coming down, the landlady, after closing his eyes and tying up his jaw, lit a couple of candles to frighten away the mice that she heard scratching behind the wainscot, and had a long cry all to herself, which did her good.

W. B. R.

CHRISTMAS ON A ROOF.

THERE was not a prettier or more peaceful-looking village than Dingle along the coast. It nestled in a tiny bay, belted by high cliffs, at the mouth of the Dar, a brown stream that flowed from the hills, where the snow lingered nearly all the year round. It was like the nest of a sea-bird built in some sequestered cove; and to look at it as you rocked on the water off the little pierhead you would have fancied that it was the home of content, and calm, and kindness. Unfortunately, wherever man establishes a settlement he takes his evil passions as well as his good qualities with him; and so it was at the tiny town of Dingle—for a town its inhabitants had the custom of calling it.

The fishermen and the owners of a few small coasters had taken possession of the shore, the non-maritime inhabitants being satisfied to build their habitations along the banks of the Dar, which were thus dotted with homesteads for a mile or more up the narrow valley through which it flowed.

The Dar, as I have said, rose in the lofty range of the Scar hills, whence it flowed over a broad table-land, and thence down a gentle slope into the gorge in which Dingle, or, at least, the main portion of it, was built. In the midst of the table-land there was what geologists held to be the crater of an extinct volcano, and there the Dar widened into a tarn or small lake, which was called Scardown Pool. All the uplands, with much of the best land on either side of the Dar valley, belonged to the Grants, a Scotch family which, with the remnant of its clan, had settled in Dingle at an early date in its history.

The present representative of the family, Alan Grant, was an old man, who was but little beloved. The ancient pride of his race and its love of power seemed to make a last struggle to reassert themselves in him. He was as fiery, as despotic, as haughty as if he had been Laird of Castle Grant in the Highlands, with a whole clan ready to do his slightest bidding. There were but few of the old followers left; and new scenes and the example of their neighbours had weakened the old feeling of kinship; so the old man was tolerated, but not loved.

His son was a gallant young fellow, with none of his father's moroseness of disposition. He was on friendly terms with all his neighbours, much to the old man's disgust; and it was evident that when he succeeded to the estates he would conform to the habits of the place and abandon the old feudal customs to which the Grants had hitherto clung with tenacity. His father, though born on the spot, had always seemed like a stranger and a sojourner merely, while Michael was a genuine son of the soil.

This difference of opinion embittered the father against the son, and made the old man more hard and stern than ever. Michael found his home could offer him little comfort. He was therefore thrown more and more into the society of his kindly neighbours. He almost deserted his father's house, making his headquarters at the cottage of his foster-brother, John Graham.

John Graham was strongly attached to his foster-brother, and more than once had healed the breach between him and his father, for whom his devotion and loyalty were so ardent as to satisfy even old Grant's notions of feudal fealty.

In return for John's devotion, the old man, in his hard way, displayed a greater amount of gratitude than might have been expected of him. And it was owing to this, and at John's intervention, that Michael had been spared a sore trial.

Alan Grant had discovered that a Miss M'Tavish, a "young lady of some thirty, or more, summers," resident not far from Dingle, was connected with the Grants, and he accordingly declared that she was the only woman (within marriageable distance, I mean) worthy to become Michael's wife.

The proposition had not met with Michael's warm approbation, but the old man would have urged it upon him but for John Graham's entreaty. Yet the evil day was only postponed, for the old man vowed Michael should wed Flora M'Tavish and no other.

Affairs were thus situated when a new complication arose to bring about a serious quarrel.

John Graham was married. He had taken to wife the daughter of one William Gaspey, who was master of a coasting sloop. And he had living with him his only sister, Jessie. Jessie was acknowledged to be the prettiest girl in all Dingle, and many and many a lover had come sighing after her to John Graham's cottage. On such occasions John had at once asked his sister if it was her wish to favour the sighing swain, and, on receiving an answer in the negative, had at once shown him the door with a polite but unmistakable hint that he had better not come again.

One suitor thus bowed out was George Gawforth, and George vowed he'd be revenged for the insult. And George Gawforth was not the man to take an oath of that sort which he didn't mean to keep.

He was an ill-conditioned, badly-disposed fellow, at best. A miller by trade, he had a little sloop, in which it was rumoured he followed the illicit calling of smuggler. He was a brawler at taverns, a retailer of slander, if not an inventor of it, and as unscrupulous in his private as in his commercial relations. It was notorious he gave bad weight, and was accused of keeping the best corn sent in to grind and giving his customers inferior grain in its place.

John Graham did not wait to ask Jessie if she approved of Gawforth; he simply bade him go about his business.

Not long after this, to John's horror, to his wife's agony, and to the surprise of all Dingle, Jessie Graham disappeared! She left no trace behind her, and John's frenzied search could discover no clue to her whereabouts. In time the wonder died out in the village; but the grief still lived in the hearts of John Graham and his wife. Not a word about Jessie reached them until nearly a year had passed. Then, who should come to the house but George Gawforth.

"I may come in now, I suppose, as your pretty sister's not here, John Graham?" he said, derisively.

John sprang up angrily, but was struck speechless and motionless by Gawforth's next words.

"I know where she is. Would you like to see her?"

See her? Of course that was the very thing John desired, of all things in the world. So Gawforth made him take a most solemn oath not to stir or speak when he saw her, and to obey him (Gawforth) implicitly on every point about the matter.

The next day Gawforth took John on board his sloop and made him go below. He was not to know where he was going, so he was to keep under hatches during the cruise. At last the boat came to an anchor, and then Gawforth bandaged John's eyes and took him ashore. He led him by a winding path up the cliffs, and then, when the bandage was removed, John found himself in the garden of a lonely cottage. There was a light at a lower window; and, looking in, he saw his sister sitting with a child in her arms. And before his sister stood a male figure—whose, he knew only too well. It was Michael Grant.

Gawforth saw John's face turn deadly white at the sight, and feared he was going to do something violent; so he hurried him away. But they had not gone a dozen paces before John fell as if shot through the heart, and the other had to carry him down to the boat. When the sloop once more came to her moorings off Dingle, John was in a raging fever, so Gawforth had to take him ashore and carry him home.

He told the reason of John's illness to the wife with great glee and inward satisfaction, for he loved evil for its own sake; but when it was revenge, too, it was indeed sweet!

John lay tossing in delirium for days, but gradually grew better and calmer, and was able to tell his wife all he had seen and all he suspected. When therefore Michael Grant came to the cottage, Mary Graham, instead of admitting him, bade him go and never darken their doors again; and when Michael asked her reason, she accused him straight of taking away Jessie. And he blushed and hesitated, and then Mary felt sure he was guilty.

Poor Mary was sore grieved, for she loved Jessie, and had ever liked and admired Michael. As a last faint hope, she said to him, "You will marry her; won't you, Grant?"

"Marry her! What do you mean? I am innocent; indeed I am. What can I say?" and he struck his forehead wildly.

"Say nothing more, Sir," said Mary, coldly.

"Listen; I can explain all. Only promise you won't tell John."

"I have no secret from my husband, Sir. Farewell! For his sake, as well as yours, I would entreat you to avoid meeting him."

With that she shut the door, and Michael went away discomfited and miserable.

John had been a sort of steward and bailiff in Alan Grant's employ. But he now resigned his office. He would take no money from a Grant, for he had an interview with the old man that ended stormily—and no wonder!

John went to the old man and laid his grief before him. Alan was fiercely angry at Michael, not so much for the actual sin as for the treachery of it.

"For a Grant to betray his foster-sister!" he kept saying, as if such a quasi-relationship could at all aggravate the offence. But when John talked about making the young laird repair the wrong by marrying his sister, the old man gave a scornful laugh, and said, a Grant could not marry below his rank. "That reparation was impossible; yet what money could do"—but John heard no further. He left the house, shaking the dust off his feet against it. Nor did the news, which reached him next day, that the old man had been struck down by paralysis, awaken any compunction in his breast. Michael had kept out of the way since his interview with Mrs. Graham; but now he was sent for to his father's bedside, and John knew it.

It was on Christmas Eve and John heard Michael was expected the same night. On that Christmas Eve John was sitting by the fire, nursing the sad memories of the past. His wife was at the table, reading the history of Christmas Eve in the Bible. She looked up and saw the bitter expression on her husband's face.

"And on earth peace and good-will!" she read aloud in a low voice.

He took no heed. She stole to his side and slid her hand in his. "God forgive us all, John; for we all need it! Let us forgive others. You forgive her?"

"Her, poor lass! That do I. But him never."

Now, in her heart of hearts, Mary had not forgiven Michael then, but had been thinking John was angered against his sister. But she felt that they must forgive Michael too, if they were really to echo the angelic message, "On earth peace and good-will." So she pleaded earnestly with her husband, and with her own heart at the same time, until she almost conquered.

But while she spoke there was a murmur in the distance, which grew rapidly into a hoarse roar, becoming louder and louder every instant.

It attracted the attention of both at the same moment. Before they could frame a conjecture as to its meaning there was a hissing sound at the door, and, looking down, they saw water pouring in and rising rapidly.

"A flood, a flood!" cried John, and snatching his wife round the waist he bore her up stairs. When he reached the upper floor he looked out of the window, and, by the dim light of a half-obscured moon, saw the whole valley filled with a boiling torrent, which every moment rose higher and higher.

It had been a wild and uncertain winter. Heavy snows had been followed by continuous rains, and the lower side of the Scardown Pool, which was in reality only a barrier of scoriae and loose boulders, covered with a fine soil washed down from the hills, had been so affected, first by frost and then by flood, that it had begun to give. The body of water soon widened the passage, and then, rushing down into the gorge, had rapidly risen and flooded the upper part of Dingle.

As he looked from the window John saw that the waters were still rising, and that the floor he now occupied would soon be under water. The only refuge, therefore, was the roof. He succeeded in making his way thither and dragging up his wife after him just as the flood gained the upper floor.

Shouts and cries of terror were to be heard on all sides, and as the turbid flood whirled by they could at times see struggling figures clinging to floating logs and bits of wood; sometimes a horse, or cow, or sheep was huried by.

Their situation was one of alarming peril. They feared that every moment the force of the water might sweep their house away, even supposing the flood did not rise higher than the roof, which was not impossible. To add to their terror, every now and then some huge tree or the floating timbers of some outbuilding would be dashed against the house by the turbulent waters, making the frail tenement shake again.

All at once, as a mass of rafters and logs came crashing against the gable end, and then, recoiling, eased off with a swing round to the current, John perceived a man clinging to it. "Help!" gasped the poor wretch, stretching a hand to John. At the risk of being dragged off himself, John grasped at it, and, after a struggle, succeeded in drawing the exhausted man up on the roof.

It was Gawforth. He had not the grace to thank John for his preservation.

"You wouldn't have saved me if you'd known who it was. Yes, you would, though, because you're a good man, and good people are fools."

"Can't you hold your railing tongue a night like this?" asked Mary Graham.

"Pshaw! a brave night! It'll clear off some of the fools. I wouldn't have given you my hand," he said, turning to John; "but I'm not ungrateful. Here's pleasant news. Yon flood's carrying young Michael Grant out to sea, I guess."

"What do you mean?" asked John.

"Why, he came to the Ferry-house this evening; but the river was so high, he couldn't cross; so he was to have a bed there. And the water's a foot or two over the chimneys, now; so he's drowned—and those with him, eh?"

"Heaven forbid!" said John, with sincerity.

"Ugh, you fool!" said the other.

There was something so diabolic about the man that they shrank from him as far as possible. They crept to the further end of the roof, and prayed for a deliverance from peril. They could hear the wretch at the other extremity of the roof chuckling as he saw signs of the devastation floating past.

The tide was rising no longer, but it had not begun to sink. Nevertheless, they were reassured, and sat down patiently to wait for day.

"Hark!" said Mary; "what is that? A child!"

A feeble wail came towards them from the gloom. They peered out anxiously, and presently could discern some dark object floating towards them.

"A cradle—a cradle, John! Look!"

The woman's eyes recognised it, but John could only guess it was as she said. The cradle was carried by the stream against the further end of the house; it struck it and caught for a moment. The shock made the child cry feebly again.

"Catch it! Stop it, man!" cried John to Gawforth, hurrying towards the cradle.

"Let it go; let it drown, and the better for it," snarled the other, who was shivering with cold. And before John could reach it, the stream had caught the cradle again, and was carrying it off. Luckily the rope, by the aid of which John had raised his wife on the roof, was still attached to the chimney. John wound it round his arm, leapt after the cradle, caught it, and, after a violent struggle, regained the roof, Gawforth not attempting to offer him the least aid.

All through the weary night they kept watch, Mary nursing the child, and John peering through the dark and praying for a boat.

As day broke a terrible scene presented itself. The valley was still filled with a broad, rapid sheet of water, which bore on its turbid bosom plentiful traces of the havoc it had committed. Boats were rowing about, taking off the survivors who had managed to reach places of safety above reach of the flood.

At last one of the boats made towards the Grants. It was very heavily laden, and made but little way. As soon as it reached them Gawforth sprang up and was going to step in, but a man in the bows pushed him back with his oar.

"Stand back, you coward! There's Mary Graham to be saved before you, Gawforth."

At first they wanted to take off Mary only and then return for the others, but she refused to leave her husband, so they determined to take him too. It was as much as they dared do; so, bidding Gawforth wait, they rowed carefully to land. As they were nearing shore, the helmsman gave an uneasy look up-stream.

"Pull away, lads—steady but sturdy! By the Lord, there's another fresher coming!" he cried. And, indeed, the stream was running perceptibly faster. By the time they had landed those whom they had rescued, the tide was rushing fiercely, and before they could turn the boat's head, another flood came raging and boiling down the gorge with a violence that threatened a yet further rising of the flood.

"For Heaven's sake, push off!" cried John, springing into the boat. "The house will never hold against that!"

"It's no use," said the helmsman; "you couldn't make way against—too late!"

There was a crash, and John Graham's house was swept away like so many of its neighbours. For a minute Gawforth clung to the thatched roof which was hurried off on the swirling water. The next instant a huge beam struck him on the head. He loosed his hold, flung up his hands, and sank never to rise more.

The horror of this spectacle struck all speechless. Then came a stir among the bystanders, and the crowd divided and Jessie came forward!

"Where is it?" she asked of some one who had evidently fetched her thither. "Ah! I see—Mary, dear Mary," and she sprang forward, caught the child from Mary's arms, and covered it with kisses. "Bless you, my babe; you'll save your mother's life. Run and tell her he is found!" she added, turning to her companion.

"Her! Who?" gasped Mary.

"Mrs. Grant, to be sure, Mary; my dear, dear Mrs. Grant!"

"What is the meaning of this, Jessie?" asked John, sternly, stepping forward.

"I will explain," said Michael Grant, who came up at that moment.

And he did explain; and the matter of the explanation was this: He had been privately married to a Miss Glenlyon, who was the daughter of a clergyman at a town some few miles off. He had been unable to acknowledge her as his wife for fear of his father, who would have disinherited him, he believed, being bent on the M'Tavish alliance. When his young wife was about to become a mother, it was necessary, to avoid all talk, to take some secluded spot for her; and for this purpose he had rented a little lonely cottage on the cliffs, a dozen miles from Dingle. After the baby was born the poor lady was hardly expected to live, and Jessie, who was in the secret, insisted on going to nurse her. The illness lasted longer than was expected, and so Jessie's visit was prolonged. It appeared that Gawforth had some secret smuggling-store near the lonely cottage, and discovered the secret. Michael had to purchase his silence, and the cunning villain had contrived to give John a wrong impression of the reason of Jessie's presence. Michael had wished to confide all to John; but both he and Jessie feared that his loyalty to the head of the family would not have allowed him to conceal the affair.

When Michael was summoned to visit his father he brought his wife and Jessie with him, intending to leave them at the Ferry-house until he had told his father of his marriage, as he had determined to do when he saw him. He was fated not to see him alive. The river was so swollen with the rains on the previous night that they could not cross, and Alan Grant had expired that same evening. When the flood came, Michael, his wife, and Jessie, with the family at the Ferry-house, had taken refuge in the boat, and had got safe ashore; but in the terror of the escape the child had been left behind in its cradle, Jessie thinking the mother had it, and the mother thinking Jessie had it.

Poor Mrs. Grant was almost distracted at the loss of her babe, until news came that Mary Graham had been brought off by a boat, and had a strange child with her answering the description of Mrs. Grant's baby.

I have little more to tell. John Graham and Michael Grant were faster friends than ever, and John went up to the hall to live, and Jessie married a young lawyer, a friend of Michael's; and everybody was happy ever after.

As for the Dar, there is no fear of its ever rising to a dangerous height again. The barrier of the old natural reservoir was breached irretrievably, and Scardown Pool was drained for ever. But John Graham—he's old John Graham now—never tires of telling the little Grants how he saved the life of their eldest brother, Archie, who is at college now, and how he once spent Christmas morning on the roof of his house.

T. H.

CHRISTMAS AMUSEMENTS.—The purveyors of amusements for the Christmas season are more than usually active and ingenious this season. Two round games at cards, published by Evans and Son, have already been noticed in our columns; and now we have two more novelties on our table which merit a word of commendation. The first of these is a round game, called "Floral Loto," published by Mr. Jaques, of Hatton-garden; and is really a most elegant and ingenious production. It is impossible to explain the nature of this game here, but we may mention that it is eminently instructive, as well as entertaining, inasmuch as it includes a valuable lesson in botany, an initiation into the language of flowers, practice in quick observation, and a useful exercise of memory. The other novelty to which we have referred emanates from the London Stereoscopic Company, and is called the "Little Marvel;" and a marvellous little affair it is, and one which "must be seen to be appreciated," but, once seen, must be appreciated highly.



PREPARING FOR THE CHRISTMAS DINNER ON BOARD A MERCHANT-SHIP.—(DRAWN BY H. D. FRISTON.)—SEE PAGE 394.